Challenges and Opportunities for Islamic Education in the Digital Era

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Abstract

In the digital age, Islamic education is encountering both hurdles and chances. Advancements in technology necessitate Islamic education to evolve and cater to the digital generation, who heavily depend on technological gadgets in their day-to-day routines. Challenges include the digital divide, varying technological literacy and resistance to change in learning methods. However, the digital era also offers opportunities to expand access to education, increase interactivity in learning and facilitate intercultural collaboration. This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach with literature analysis to explore the challenges and opportunities in Islamic education in the digital era. The results show that with the right strategy, Islamic education can utilise technology to improve the quality of education and learners' character. The digital age allows students to control their education by using online resources, but they need critical thinking skills to use information responsibly. Embracing digital tools can help Islamic education face challenges and create a more inclusive learning environment. Hence, Educators must improve their technological skills to integrate digital tools into teaching.

Keywords: Islamic Education, Digital Age, Challenges, Opportunities, Education Technology

1. Introduction

The origin of the word 'education' comes from the Greek, *'paedagogie'*, which means 'guidance for children', then developed with the addition of prefixes and suffixes in Indonesian to become the word 'education', this term comes from a combination of the word *'paedagogos'*, which consists of *'paedos'* which means child, and *'agoge'* which means guidance (Ramli, 2022). Literally, *'paedagogos'* refers to someone who guides children in their growth towards independence. Education is a necessity for all humans, but we often forget or even do not understand the essence of education itself. Education is an effort to develop in a balanced manner the following elements of the human person, namely physical, spiritual, intellectual, aesthetic and social elements directed at one educational goal. In contrast, Islamic education is highly regarded for its foundation in the Quran, Hadiths, and the teachings of scholars and inspirational figures. However, it faces numerous challenges in practice. The integration of technology is now essential in education.

According to Oemar Muhammad Al-Toumy al-Syaibany, Islamic education includes efforts to change personal behaviour with Islamic values as a foundation, both in personal and social life, as well as interaction with the surrounding environment through the learning process (Al-Syaibany, 1979). Education aims to encourage and expand the natural human potential, both physically and mentally, in line with the norms accepted in society and culture. On the other hand, Islamic education aims to make a person noble, ethical, ethical, and moral. This cannot be separated from the purpose of religion itself. It even aims to increase emotional potential in terms of understanding, recognition, and

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cultivation of positive values, the main source of which is the Holy Qur'an and Hadith of the Prophet Muhammad SAW, the practice of which is applied in the lives of each individual.

Islamic education acts as a means to develop rational thinking and direct behaviour and emotions in accordance with Islamic values, so that these values are also reflected in everyday life. As such, education needs to follow a healthy logic in understanding and interpreting the reality of life in order to achieve the expected life goals (Johan et al., 2024).

Looking at the development of today, it seems that we are in the digital era, all activities in its development have become very sophisticated through a Digital technology device. The digital era is a period that has experienced previous developments from all aspects of life. This continues to move without being stopped. Because the community itself demands and wants everything to be easier and more practical. The ease of web-based services, various social networking sites greatly encourage users to attach personal bios that are private, as a result of which interest arises by looking at each profile from the list of active users, adding or accepting friends to join these social sites. The relationship between one device and another from internet media with social networking applications is a basic benchmark in digital communication. Such as application sites 'Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, Instagram, TikTok and many others. Through this media, we can call digital technology an invention that makes it very easy to move information, either individuals or groups with a digital device from a short distance or from across the world.

As a result, without us realising in this era (digital era), digital devices such as smartphones or laptops have become part or even a human lifestyle, it is very difficult for someone to be separated from digital activities. the way people interact has changed greatly with the sophistication of digital technology. The convenience can be seen in accessing information searches through the media freely with a smartphone/laptop connected to the internet. However, keep in mind the adverse effects also appear. Crimes are facilitated, access to nude or pornographic viewing is easy to find, addiction to online games causes mental damage to children from an early age, or even copyright infringement is so easy to do. Indeed, digital devices are very helpful for human needs and make it easier to do human work. On the one hand, it has a huge impact on positive changes in daily values. But on the other hand, it also turns out to have a very dangerous negative impact, as a result of which it becomes a new challenge in human life, both in terms of economy, socio-culture, and education, especially Islamic education (Munir et al., 2021).

2. Literature Review

This research method adopts a descriptive qualitative approach with a focus on library research. The researcher conducts in-depth exploration and review of literature that includes journals, books, and scientific works relevant to the research topic. The main objective of the research is to present in detail, valid, and in depth the Challenges and Opportunities of Islamic Education in the Digital Age, with the aim of improving the character of students. By using a qualitative descriptive approach and relying on literature analysis, researchers can carefully understand and critically analyse the importance of the Challenges and Opportunities of Islamic Education in the Digital Age.

3. Methods

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detail, valid, and in depth the Challenges and Opportunities of Islamic Education in the Digital Age, with the aim of improving the character of students. By using a qualitative descriptive approach and relying on literature analysis, researchers can carefully understand and critically analyse the importance of the Challenges and Opportunities of Islamic Education in the Digital Age.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Challenges and Solutions for Islamic Education in the Age of Digitalisation

The world of education today is often flooded with criticism by the public. This is because there are some students and graduates from schools who show less commendable attitudes. Even in this digital era, it is not only high school graduates or other public school graduates who show disrespectful attitudes, there are also graduates from *pesantren* (Islamic boarding school). In the community's view, students who study at *pesantren* will provide/show commendable morals. However, in fact, not all of these students show good character. It is hard to believe that Islamic education is expected to develop, but there are many challenges that cause Islamic education to be less developed in the digital era. Islamic religious education faces the challenge of creating graduates with the ability to possess knowledge, expertise, and strong character (Halimah et al., 2023). For this reason, maturity in technology is necessary. Between Islamic education and developments in this digital era must be balanced. In the sense that Islamic education must be able to keep up with the times so as not to lag behind other education. Islamic religious education, in its broadest sense, encompasses all activities aimed at nurturing and enhancing human potential in alignment with Islamic principles. This ultimately leads to the cultivation of individuals who are devout servants of Allah and capable of fulfilling the role of Allah's representative on Earth.

It was found that technology can be an effective tool to expand access to religious education, especially for those who live in rural areas or do not have easy access to formal education institutions. Through online platforms and social media, Islamic communities can connect globally, enabling the exchange of ideas, collaboration and cross-cultural learning that enriches the understanding of Islam. By utilising technology wisely, religious education can become more dynamic, interactive and engaging for the younger generation of Muslims who are accustomed to technology.

Islamic religious education is often praised for its strong foundation in the Qur'an, hadith, and the wisdom of scholars, yet it faces numerous obstacles in reality. These challenges have resulted in a decline in the quality of individuals educated in Islamic institutions, leading to the marginalisation of Muslims on a global scale.

The obstacles confronting Islamic religious education are not isolated or limited. There exist several intertwined challenges or issues that are interconnected. A primary obstacle of national education, encompassing Islamic religious education, is the inadequate standard of education leading to substandard human resources. The substandard human resources have an influence on the mediocre moral fibre of the nation. Additional hurdles encountered by Islamic religious education consist of ideological obstacles, duality in the Islamic education system, language barriers, and challenges in learning methodologies.

The lack of drive and dedication from certain Muslims in connecting scientific expertise with advancement is a significant ideological hurdle. This has led to a general lack of enthusiasm for the pursuit of knowledge, particularly in the field of science, within the Muslim community. The limited and narrow interpretation of Islam plays a significant role in hindering the prioritisation of scientific knowledge. The intensity of this ideological challenge is evident in the substandard and inconsistent quality of the young Muslim population (Saputra & Murdani, 2023).

In the Islamic education system, the issue of dualism stems from policy matters. The regulations and administration of (Islamic) education policies are overseen by relevant authorities and their subordinate bodies. In Indonesia, the Ministry of Religious Affairs (MoRA) is responsible for Islamic education, whereas the Ministry of Education and Culture (MoEC) handles general education. The Ministry of Research, Technology and Higher Education (Kemenristekdikti) supervises both secular and religious higher education establishments. These bodies have the power to govern their respective educational institutions. Despite ongoing attempts to address the dual management of Islamic education by the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Ministry of Education and Culture, it continues to affect the development of Islamic education (Kismanto, 2021).

Some Islamic schools in the country face issues with language, particularly in mastering foreign languages like Arabic, English, and other languages. The proficiency of educators and staff in foreign languages remains low and varies greatly. Proficiency in foreign languages is crucial for accessing a range of information and advancements in science and technology. Overcoming this linguistic obstacle is necessary to enhance access to knowledge and information, contributing to the betterment of human resources and Islamic educational institutions (Yasmansyah & Zakir, 2022).

The teaching methods in Islamic education face challenges, particularly in terms of the approaches utilised. From primary to secondary school, Islamic religious education commonly relies on one-way teaching methods that can be perceived as dull. Educators play a significant role in the classroom and often limit students' opportunities for growth by sticking to traditional teaching techniques. For instance, lectures are favoured over interactive, dialogue-based, dynamic, and critical methods, which hinder students from engaging actively in the learning process (Aziz & Zakir, 2022).

In Islamic education, one major obstacle is the inadequate skills in using technology for communication and information. Not having these skills hinders access to important knowledge and advancements in education and overall progress. As a result, the quality of human resources is at risk, as seen in viral social media incidents of students challenging teachers. This highlights the importance of instilling morals in developing human resources (Aziz & Zakir, 2022).

The importance of developing appropriate strategies to address the challenges faced and capitalise on the opportunities presented. The importance of training and professional development for educators to strengthen competencies in the use of technology in Islamic learning was also emphasised. In addition, collaboration between the government, educational institutions and the private sector is needed to ensure adequate investment in technological infrastructure and development of relevant educational content. With a holistic and sustainable approach, it is hoped that an inclusive, innovative and age-appropriate Islamic learning ecosystem can be created (Arif et al., 2024).

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) has a significant role in shaping the character of a religious, moral, and competitive nation. However, in the digital era, the challenges faced by PAI are increasingly complex. Nuryadin (2017) emphasised the importance of strategic steps to face these challenges, including improving the quality of human resources (HR), revamping digital technology-based infrastructure, utilising digital learning media, and implementing participatory learning methods (Aziz & Zakir, 2022).

One of the main challenges in Islamic religious education in the digital era is improving the quality of human resources. Educators, education personnel and students must have technical and non-technical competencies that are in line with the needs of the times. Technical competencies include expertise, professionalism and mastery of technology, while nontechnical competencies include creativity, modern values and deep religious literacy. Educators in Islamic educational institutions must be able to understand the curriculum, lead effectively, master foreign languages, and manage

information technology. On the other hand, developing the physical, spiritual and spiritual potential of students is a must to create graduates who excel academically and have strong character.

In addition to improving human resources, improving infrastructure based on digital technology is also an important strategic step. Digitalisation in education not only facilitates administration and management, but also supports the learning process. Unfortunately, many Islamic educational institutions still face limited infrastructure. Therefore, a financing strategy involving the government and the private sector is needed to provide adequate information technology facilities. This digital infrastructure will be the foundation in creating learning that is adaptive and responsive to global demands.

The utilisation of digital-based learning media is also a necessity in the era of the industrial revolution 4.0. The current generation is divided into digital immigrants and digital natives, both of which have an attachment to technology. Digital media such as the internet, e-learning platforms, and learning applications allow educators to deliver material flexibly and interestingly. Educators are required to guide learners in utilising technology positively to increase learning effectiveness.

Participatory learning methods are another relevant approach in the digital era. Learning that was previously one-way is now developing into two-way, open, and multidisciplinary. Methods such as discussion, question and answer, interactive lectures and teleconferencing allow learners to play an active role in the learning process. When these methods are combined with digital media, the results are optimised, creating more inclusive, creative and participation-based learning.

With this strategic step, Islamic religious education can adapt and face the challenges of the digital era. The combination of improving the quality of human resources, utilising technology and innovating learning methods is expected to produce a generation that is not only competent in science but also has a strong religious and moral character. This is important to ensure that Islamic religious education remains relevant and contributes to creating a globally competitive nation.

4.2. Opportunities for Islamic Education in the Age of Digitalisation

Emerging opportunities in the digital age to strengthen Islamic learning, it was found that technology can be an effective tool to expand access to religious education, especially for those who live in rural areas or do not have easy access to formal educational institutions. Through online platforms and social media, Islamic communities can connect globally, enabling the exchange of ideas, collaboration and cross-cultural learning that enriches the understanding of Islam. By utilising technology wisely, religious education can become more dynamic, interactive and engaging for the younger generation of Muslims who are accustomed to technology (Arif et al., 2024).

Digital technology opens the door for wider and global access to Islamic education. Through online platforms, individuals from different parts of the world can access high-quality Islamic education resources. This enables the global dissemination of religious knowledge and enhances intercultural understanding and tolerance. With the right approach, Islamic education can reach a wider audience and positively benefit Muslims around the world. The use of digital technology also provides opportunities for the development of more interactive, creative and engaging learning methods in Islamic education (Hajri, 2023).

Videos, animations, simulations and other multimedia content can make learning more engaging and help students understand religious concepts better (Abdulrahaman et al., 2020). Live interaction through online platforms also encourages discussion and collaboration between students and educators, strengthening the learning process. Digital technology enables more efficient implementation of evaluation and monitoring in Islamic education. With the online platform in place, educators can track individual student progress, provide timely feedback and identify areas for

improvement. This helps improve the effectiveness of teaching and learning, and provides opportunities for customisation and improvement of learning content.

5. Conclusion

Islamic education in the digital age faces complex challenges, including gaps in access to technology, low digital literacy and resistance to curriculum change. However, the digital age also provides great opportunities to improve the education system through innovative use of technology and better accessibility. Addressing these challenges requires the development of effective strategies, training for educators in the use of technology, and collaboration between the government, educational institutions and the private sector. With a holistic and sustainable approach, Islamic education can develop dynamically, be relevant to the demands of the times, and be able to produce a generation that is not only intellectually intelligent but also noble in accordance with Islamic values.

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