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INTEGRATION OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY IN ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS EDUCATION TO IMPROVE STUDENTS' RELIGIOUS LITERACY IN THE DIGITAL ERA

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ABSTRACT

The rapid development of digital technology has brought both new opportunities and challenges to the field of education, including Islamic religious education. Strengthening religious literacy has become increasingly important amid the surge of digital information that can influence students' understanding of religious values.This study aims to explore how digital technology can be integrated into Islamic religious education to enhance students' religious literacy. A qualitative descriptive approach was employed, with data collected through interviews, observations, questionnaires, and documentation at a junior high school in the Gowa Regency area. The study's findings indicate that integrating digital technology—such as interactive learning applications and Learning Management System (LMS) platforms—significantly enhances students' understanding of religious concepts. Notably, 85% of students reported that the use of digital media in Islamic religious learning has been beneficial. However, the study also highlights several challenges, including limited digital literacy among teachers and inadequate technological infrastructure in some schools. Addressing these challenges is crucial to maximizing the potential of digital integration in religious education. This research makes a valuable contribution to the development of relevant and effective religious learning methods in the digital era.

Keywords: Digital technology; Islamic religious education; religious literacy

1) INTRODUCTION

The development of digital technology has brought great changes in various aspects of life, including in the field of education. This transformation can be seen from the way individuals access information, communicate, and carry out the learning process. Digital technology not only facilitates access to various learning resources, but also expands the scope of learning materials so that they can be accessed anytime and anywhere (Hwang & Chang, 2021). One example is the application of technology in digital classrooms that allow students to access learning materials through electronic devices such as computers, tablets, or smart phones. This

makes students no longer completely dependent on the existence of physical textbooks or face-to-face schedules in class.

Technology such as the Learning Management System (LMS) is one of the significant innovations in supporting digital education. LMS allows teachers to manage learning in a more structured manner by providing features such as material storage, online evaluation, and discussion forums. In addition, gamification-based learning applications are also growing in popularity, as they can increase students' interest in learning by utilizing fun game elements (Kundu & Bej, 2022). Moreover, video-based learning on platforms like YouTube has proven to be an invaluable resource, especially for visual learners. Social media also plays a significant role in informal education, creating spaces for discussion and the sharing of relevant learning materials.

In this digital era, the integration of technology in education is an urgent need. The current generation, often referred to as digital natives, grew up in a technology-rich environment. They tend to be more familiar with digital devices compared to traditional learning methods. Therefore, to keep the learning process relevant and engaging, educational institutions must effectively incorporate digital technologies. This not only enhances learning efficiency but also provides a more personalized and adaptive learning experience tailored to individual student needs.

On the other hand, religious literacy is one of the important aspects in the formation of student character. Religious literacy is the ability to understand, analyze, and apply religious values in daily life (Azra, 2020). This literacy is not only about knowing religious teachings theoretically, but also how students are able to face moral dilemmas and make decisions based on religious values. With good religious literacy, students are expected to live a life that is meaningful, ethical, and beneficial to society.

However, the challenges of the digital era cannot be ignored. One of them is the rise of negative content or misinformation that can affect students' understanding of religious teachings. This kind of content, which is often widely disseminated through social media and other digital platforms, can provide a misleading understanding or even contradict religious values (Rahmatullah & Harahap, 2023). In addition, students who lack digital literacy are at risk of being exposed to invalid or biased information. This can be an obstacle to the formation of healthy and correct religious literacy.

This condition shows the importance of utilizing digital technology as a tool to support Islamic religious education learning. Digital technology can help address these challenges by providing access to valid and trusted learning resources. By using an application designed specifically for religious learning, students can learn religious teachings in a more structured and engaging way. In addition, online discussion platforms can be a space to clarify understanding and deepen students' insights into religious values.

The integration of digital technology in Islamic religious education is expected to be an innovative solution to improve students' religious literacy. One of the main benefits of technology in religious education is its ability to create more engaging and interactive learning experiences (Munir, 2021). For example, augmented reality-based learning applications can be

used to simulate historical events in religious teachings, so that students can better understand the context of those teachings. In addition, the interactive video platform allows students to learn independently while getting direct feedback from the system.

With the characteristics of the digital generation who are familiar with technology, this approach is expected to be able to make religious learning more relevant and effective. Therefore, this study aims to examine how digital technology can be integrated into Islamic religious education to improve students' religious literacy. The focus of this research also includes how technology can help students face the challenges of the digital era, including countering the negative impact of misinformation and strengthening students' character through technology-based religious learning. However, further research is needed to answer an important question, what are the obstacles in students' religious literacy today? and How can digital technology help overcome these obstacles?

By answering these questions, this study aims to explain the benefits of digital technology in improving students' religious literacy in the digital era, as well as offering a new approach in religious education learning that is relevant to the challenges and opportunities of modern times.

2) METHODS

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach to explore the integration of digital technology in Islamic religious education and its impact on students' religious literacy. The qualitative approach was chosen because it is in accordance with the purpose of the research, which is to investigate the phenomenon in depth, including the perceptions, experiences, and practices of teachers and students in using digital technology for religious learning (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This approach allows researchers to dig into richer and more detailed insights into the use of digital technology in the context of religious education.

The research was conducted at Junior High Schools (SMP) located in the Gowa regency, where digital technology infrastructure is available, such as internet connections, technological devices, and access to learning applications. The choice of this location was based on the availability of adequate technological facilities, as well as the implementation of faith-based learning that was already running in the school (Miles & Huberman, 2014). This location also provides an opportunity to learn how schools with the support of digital infrastructure can optimize Islamic religious learning.

The research subjects included Islamic Religious Education teachers, junior high school students, and the school principal. The teachers were involved to understand how they utilize digital technology in the learning process. Junior high school students participated to assess their level of religious literacy and gather their perceptions regarding the use of digital technology. The principal, as a supporting informant, provided data related to school policies that support digital-based learning. These subjects were chosen to offer diverse perspectives on the implementation of technology in Islamic religious education.

This study uses several data collection instruments:

1) Interview: In-depth interviews were conducted with teachers and principals to gain an in-depth understanding of the policies, strategies, and challenges faced in integrating digital technology into Islamic religious education. This approach enables the extraction of valuable insights into perceptions, experiences, and challenges encountered when integrating technology into the classroom.
2) Observation: Observations were made during the learning process to directly observe the implementation of digital technology in Islamic religious education classes. This technique allows researchers to obtain authentic data on the interaction between teachers, students, and digital technology, as well as understand the dynamics of learning more comprehensively.
3) Questionnaire: A questionnaire was given to students to measure their perception of digital technology-based learning and religious literacy. This instrument is used because it can reach many respondents efficiently and provide relevant quantitative and qualitative data related to students' experiences and views on the use of digital technology in religious education
4) Documentation: Related documents, such as syllabus, digital teaching materials, and reports on the implementation of technology-based learning, were collected to support data from interviews and observations. The collection of these documents provides additional in-depth data and allows triangulation to increase the validity of the research results. (Creswell & Creswell, 2018)

The data was analyzed using a qualitative descriptive analysis approach with the following stages:

1) Data reduction is carried out by grouping the data obtained based on the main themes, such as the benefits, challenges, and effectiveness of digital technology in religious learning. This stage is important to simplify the raw data and focus the analysis on aspects relevant to the research objectives.
2) Data Presentation: The presentation of data is carried out in the form of narratives, tables, and diagrams to facilitate interpretation and help readers visually understand the research findings. This data representation aims to present the results of the analysis in an organized manner so that it is easier to draw valid conclusions.
3) Drawing conclusions: The conclusion is made based on the data that has been analysed to answer the formulation of the research problem. This process involves synthesizing key findings to produce a comprehensive understanding, as well as providing clear and focused answers to research questions (Sugiyono, 2020).

This method allows for an in-depth exploration of the integration of digital technology in Islamic religious education and its impact on students' religious literacy.

3) RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Improvement of Student Comprehension

The results of the analysis of questionnaire and interview data show that students experience an increase in their understanding of religious material after using digital learning applications. Interactive media such as learning videos, digital quizzes, and worship simulations make students more interested in learning about religious topics.

The analysis of questionnaire and interview data indicates that students experience a significant improvement in their understanding of religious material after using digital learning applications. Interactive media—such as learning videos, digital quizzes, and worship simulations—make religious topics more engaging and appealing to students.

Notably, 85% of students reported that digital-based materials enhanced their understanding of religious concepts more effectively than conventional learning methods. This data suggests that most students perceive digital technology as providing a more effective learning experience compared to traditional approaches that primarily rely on textbooks and teacher-led lectures. Several factors may contribute to these findings, including:

1. **Interactivity Factor:**

Digital materials often feature interactive elements such as videos, quizzes, and simulations that make learning more engaging and dynamic. These features allow students to actively participate in activities that stimulate their thinking, helping to deepen their understanding of religious concepts. For example, a worship simulation or a quiz on the concept of prayer can provide a more concrete and applicable understanding compared to simply reading texts or listening to lectures (Hwang & Chang, 2021).

2. **Accessibility Factor:**

Digital materials can be accessed anytime and anywhere, offering students the flexibility to learn beyond classroom hours. This accessibility enables learners to revisit challenging content, rewatch videos, or practice questions whenever necessary. As a result, students can deepen their understanding without being restricted by class schedules or the availability of live instruction. Additionally, this flexibility helps overcome the time constraints often encountered in traditional face-to-face learning environments.

3. **Use of Multimedia:**

Incorporating multimedia elements such as learning videos, infographics, and animations into digital materials allows students to visualize complex religious concepts that might be difficult to grasp through text alone. Multimedia-based learning also engages multiple sensory channels—such as sight and hearing—which enhances comprehension and retention of information (Kundu & Bej, 2022).

4. **Motivation Factor:**

Technology-based learning is often more enjoyable for students, particularly those belonging to the digital generation who are already comfortable with technological devices. This heightened engagement encourages students to be more active and enthusiastic about

learning, contributing to a deeper and more meaningful understanding of the material being taught.

5. **Personalized Learning Approach:**

Technology facilitates a more personalized learning experience, allowing students to progress at their own pace and according to their preferred learning style. For example, digital learning apps can provide real-time feedback and adjust the difficulty level of content based on the learner's progress. This not only fosters a deeper understanding of the material but also boosts students' confidence in their learning journey (Munir, 2021).

In addition, teachers also revealed that the use of digital technology increases student involvement in learning. One teacher stated, "The interactivity of digital media, such as quizzes and videos, makes students more enthusiastic and focused while learning compared to the usual lecture method." This finding is in line with the views of Munir (2021), who stated that digital technology can make the learning process more interesting and effective. Teachers also reported that digital technology, such as the Learning Management System (LMS), facilitates the management of teaching materials, assignment assignments, and evaluations. Technology also allows for personalization of learning, so students can learn at their own pace.

In addition to effectiveness, there are also major obstacles identified. These obstacles are the lack of technological infrastructure in some schools, the low digital literacy of teachers, and the limited time to develop technology-based materials.

Interpretation of Research Results Based on Theory

The results of this study are in line with the Technology-Enhanced Learning Theory which states that the use of digital technology in education can increase learning effectiveness by creating a learning experience that is more interactive, flexible, and adaptable to the individual needs of students. According to Kundu & Bej (2022), digital technology provides a variety of tools and resources that enable more personalized learning and suit students' learning styles, as well as facilitate more in-depth and contextual learning. Technology not only improves the accessibility of information, but also enables a more engaging and engaging learning experience through features such as learning videos, digital quizzes, simulations, and online discussions.

The increase in student understanding found in this study is 85% of students reporting that digital-based materials help them understand religious concepts better compared to conventional learning methods, this shows that digital media is effective in improving the quality of religious understanding. Digital media provides opportunities for students to learn independently, access various materials from different sources, and reflect on the material in a more active way. This is in accordance with the principles of Technology-Based Learning Theory, which emphasizes the importance of using technology to create a more engaging and interactive learning experience, as well as overcoming time and space limitations that are often obstacles in traditional learning.

Thus, the results of this study show that the use of digital technology in Islamic religious education not only increases student engagement, but also helps them better understand and internalize religious teachings in a way that is more relevant to the challenges of the digital era.

The integration of digital technology in religious learning can be an effective solution to face these challenges, and is in line with the theory that suggests that technology can enrich the learning experience and improve students' understanding and skills in various fields, including religious education.

Analysis of the Role of Digital Technology in Religious Education Learning

The integration of digital technology plays a very important role in the learning of Islamic religious education in a multifaceted way. Here are some of the key ways digital technologies contribute to learning:

1) Increases Student Motivation:

The use of digital technology in learning can create a more engaging and enjoyable environment for students. Today's generation, often referred to as digital natives, are more familiar with digital devices and tend to feel more interested and engaged in learning that uses technology. Media such as learning videos, interactive apps, and educational games can change the way students learn to be more dynamic and engaging, thus motivating them to more actively participate in Islamic learning. Research shows that students who learn through technology tend to have higher levels of motivation because they can learn in a more personalized way and according to their interests and needs (Hwang & Chang, 2021).

2) Easier Access to Information

One of the main benefits of digital technology in religious education is the ease of access to information. Students can access teaching materials anytime and anywhere through digital devices, such as smartphones, tablets, or computers. This provides greater flexibility in the teaching and learning process, allowing students to delve deeper into religious topics at their own pace and time. Additionally, students can access a variety of learning resources, such as e-books, articles, videos, and other references that can enrich their understanding of the teachings of Islam, which may not be accessible through conventional methods.

3) Improving Collaboration

Technology also allows students to collaborate more easily and efficiently. Digital platforms, such as Learning Management Systems (LMS), online discussion forums, and collaboration apps, allow students to discuss, share knowledge, and collaborate on learning projects. This kind of collaboration is very important in religious learning, as it allows students to exchange opinions, broaden their horizons, and deepen their understanding of Islamic religious teachings. Group discussions facilitated by technology can enrich students' learning experience and help them to apply their understanding of religion in their daily lives.

However, while technology brings many benefits, it also presents some challenges that need to be overcome. One of the biggest challenges is the need for digital literacy for both teachers and students. Teachers need to have adequate skills in using technology to support learning, while students must also be trained to use digital devices effectively in the learning process. Without good digital literacy, technology may not be used optimally. In addition, adequate supporting infrastructure such as stable internet access, sufficient technological devices, and relevant learning applications is an important factor in the successful integration of

technology in learning. In some areas, especially in schools with limited resources, this infrastructure challenge is still an obstacle that needs to be overcome so that technology-based learning can run effectively.

Thus, although digital technology provides a great opportunity to improve Islamic religious learning, there needs to be further efforts to overcome challenges related to digital literacy and supporting infrastructure so that technology can be used optimally to improve students' religious literacy in the digital era.

Implications of the Findings on Religious Education in the Digital Era

1) For Teachers

This finding emphasizes the need for digital literacy training for religious education teachers so that they can make optimal use of technology in learning. Teachers as learning facilitators need to master the use of relevant digital devices and applications to convey religious materials interactively. With good digital literacy, teachers can design engaging learning, for example using interactive videos, worship simulations, or app-based quizzes, which can increase student understanding and engagement. In addition, teachers also need to be equipped with strategies to face digital challenges, such as filtering content that is not in accordance with religious values and assisting students in using technology wisely.

2) For Students

The use of digital technology provides opportunities for students to learn religion through media that are relevant to their lives. The digital native generation is more familiar with technology and interactive media, so this approach not only improves their understanding, but also makes it easier for them to internalize religious values. For example, faith-based learning applications can provide content that is appropriate to the challenges of the digital age, such as how to deal with misinformation or moral issues on social media. This helps students not only understand religious teachings textually, but also apply them in daily life in a relevant way.

3) For Education Policy

These findings provide a basis for education policymakers to pay attention to the need for technology in religious learning. Policies must be directed at providing adequate technological infrastructure, such as stable internet networks, technological devices that can be accessed by teachers and students, and learning applications that support religious curricula. In addition, policies also need to include ongoing training for educators and the development of technology-based curricula that integrate religious values with the challenges and opportunities of the digital era.

4) CONCLUSION

The results of this study confirm that digital technology is not only a tool, but also a strategic solution to improve students' religious literacy in the digital era. Technology provides a new approach that is more interesting, flexible, and relevant in conveying religious values to students. Therefore, these findings can be an important reference in the development of

technology-based religious education curriculum, especially to answer the challenges of modernization and changes in the characteristics of current students. By maximizing the potential of digital technology, religious education can become more inclusive, contextual, and have a positive impact on shaping students' character in the digital era.

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