

## Islamic Education Strategy as the Foundation for Character Building in Students in Facing the Challenges of the Digital World

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### ABSTRACT

Islamic education plays an important role as a basis in shaping the character of students to have noble morals and be able to face challenges in today's digital world. In the midst of technological advances that bring a lot of fast information, not all content available in cyberspace is in accordance with moral and religious values. Islamic education not only teaches religious knowledge, but also instills values such as honesty, responsibility, and patience that are important to shape the overall personality of students. The challenges of the digital world such as gadget addiction, hoaxes and negative content need to be addressed with appropriate Islamic education strategies, including digital literacy based on Islamic values and supervision from teachers and parents. This way, Islamic education can be a strong foundation for students to stick to moral and spiritual values in the technological era, and build characters that are ready to face the changing times. Islamic education also has an important role in the formal and non-formal education system to support the formation of a noble generation.

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### INTRODUCTION

Education is a means of passing on knowledge and skills across generations with the aim of developing the potential of students so that they are able to face the challenges of the times (Somad, 2021). In the era of globalization, Islamic education plays an important role in shaping children's characters so that they have noble character and live in accordance with the teachings of Sharia. Unfortunately, the mass media today often contains negative content such as violence and pornography, which can corrupt children's morals (Rahmawati, D., 2022). Therefore, alternative media such as Islamic animation, for example Syamil Dodo, is needed to instill Islamic values from an early age. The development of digital technology also poses a serious challenge in character education. Unfiltered and rapid information can shape behavior that is inconsistent with moral values. In this context, Islamic education serves as a crucial foundation in shaping students' personalities to be strong spiritually, socially, and morally (Anwar, R. N., & Mulya, 2025). Islamic education not only functions as the transmission of religious knowledge but also as a comprehensive effort in character formation. Islamic teachings, especially the values in the hadith, need to be integrated to shape a generation that is ready to face the dynamics of the digital age (Judrah, M., Arjum, A., Haeruddin, 2024). Challenges such as hoaxes, gadget addiction, and cultural identity crises need to be addressed through a balanced cognitive, affective, and

psychomotor approach to Islamic education. Islamic education aims to shape a complete human being (*insan kamil*), as emphasized in QS. Al-Baqarah: 129 and QS. Luqman: 12–19. According to figures such as Al-Abrasyi and Al-Ghazali, the core of Islamic education is the formation of noble character and balance between worldly and spiritual aspects. Islamic character is marked by values such as honesty (*shidq*), trustworthiness, justice (*'adl*), and patience (*shabr*).

## METHOD

This study implements a qualitative approach using a literature review method. The data analysis used in this study is derived from literature sources such as books, magazines, newspapers, and others. Since the data for this study is derived from previously published literature, the data used in this study is secondary. Some of the literature and publications that serve as sources of data for this research include “Challenges and Strategies in Islamic Character Education in the Digital Age” by Mashfufah et al. (2025), the book “Islamic Education: Within the National Education System in Indonesia” by Prof. Dr. Haidar Putra (2012), and many others. The selection of these sources was made selectively based on relevance, credibility, and their contribution to the discussion of the research topic.

## RESULTS

### The Concept of Islamic Educational Values as Pillars of Character

Islamic religious education plays a central role in nurturing the moral character of the younger generation. Its primary function is not limited to the theoretical transmission of Islamic teachings but also includes instilling ethical principles that serve as guidelines for daily behavior. With the advancement of technology and digitalization in the field of education, access to information has become increasingly open. However, this situation also poses a threat in the form of exposure to negative content that can influence the moral development of children and adolescents. Therefore, it is necessary to reassess how Islamic education can adapt and play its role in this digital environment. The approach used in this education is comprehensive, not only teaching religious rituals but also developing universal values such as honesty, responsibility, and respect for others. These values are essential in facing moral challenges in the digital age. Additionally, Islamic Religious Education has the potential to foster a healthy digital culture, where ethics and noble values are applied in interactions through social media and various other digital platforms. However, before delving into the role of Islamic education as a pillar of character, it is important to understand what education and character are.

The term “education” comes from the word “*didik*” with the addition of “*pe*” at the beginning and “*an*” at the end, which means “action.” This term originates from the Greek word “*pedagogie*,” which means guidance given to children, and was eventually translated into English as “education,” meaning development or guidance. In Arabic, education is often translated as “*tarbiyah*” (Yunita, Y., & Mujib, 2021). The term education means guidance and assistance provided to students by adults intentionally, so that students can grow up. This has evolved to mean that education is an effort undertaken by a group or an individual to become mature and achieve a better standard of living. In other words, education is all the efforts made by adults to guide children toward maturity, both physically and spiritually (Yunita, Y., & Mujib, 2021).

Education is a planned and conscious effort to create a learning environment and learning process where students actively develop their potential to become individuals with religious strength, personality, intelligence, noble character, self-control, and the skills needed for themselves and the surrounding community (National Education System Law, Chapter I, Article I, Paragraph I).

Meanwhile, character comes from the Latin word “*character*,” which means nature, disposition, temperament, morals, personality, and ethics. Character is also defined as “*khuluq, sajiyyah, thab'u*” (morals, nature, or disposition) in Arabic. Character is sometimes interpreted as “*syakhsiyyah*,” which is closer in meaning to “personality” (Fitriya, I., & PS, 2020).

Terminologically, character is defined as the general nature of humans that depends on their own life aspects. Character can also be interpreted as the same as the morals and ethics of a nation, meaning that character is the values of human behavior related to the one and only God, oneself, fellow humans, the environment, and the nation. These values are manifested in thoughts, attitudes, feelings, words, and actions based on religious, legal, cultural, and customary norms. A nation with character is a nation with good manners. Therefore, character is defined as the traits or behaviors inherent in every human being. Character is usually a distinctive feature of every human being in interacting and communicating with God Almighty, fellow creatures, people throughout social life, and with people from their own nation and country (Fitriya, I., & PS, 2020).

As explained earlier, character is synonymous with morality, ethics, and conduct. Therefore, from an Islamic perspective, character is the result of the application of Islamic law (worship and social interactions) based on a firm belief rooted in the Quran and Sunnah (Yunita, Y., & Mujib, 2021). According to Ibn Maskawaih (320-421/932-1030), morals are “a state of the soul which causes it to perform its actions without thought or deliberation,” meaning a state of the soul that causes actions to arise without deep thought or consideration.

According to Al-Abrasyi in his interpretation (1992: 46), the ultimate goals of Islamic education are divided into four categories: character building, preparing students for life in this world and the hereafter, mastery of knowledge, and skills for working in society. Meanwhile, according to Al-Aynayni (1980:153-217), the objectives of Islamic education are divided into general and specific objectives. The general objective is to cultivate individuals who worship Allah, a principle that applies universally across all places, times, and circumstances. Special objectives, on the other hand, are determined based on the local context, taking into account geographical, economic, and other factors specific to the area. According to him, the aspects of Islamic education include: physical aspects, intellectual aspects, doctrinal aspects, moral aspects, psychological aspects, aesthetic aspects, and cultural aspects (Yunita, Y., & Mujib, 2021).

Therefore, through spiritual training that involves sensory intelligence, emotions, reasoning, and the brain, the purpose of Islamic education is to shape a well-rounded human personality. This education should facilitate human development in every aspect, such as spiritual, intellectual, imaginative, physical, and scientific, both individually and collectively. In accordance with the teachings and objectives of Islam, as stated by the Prophet Muhammad, “I was sent to perfect moral character,” education must encourage virtue and the achievement of perfection in life (Hermawan, 2020).

## THE CHALLENGES OF THE DIGITAL WORLD ON CHARACTER BUILDING

In today's digital age, technology is developing rapidly and influencing almost every aspect of human life, including education and character building in students. On one hand, technology facilitates access to information and communication. However, on the other hand, if not used wisely, technology also poses serious challenges to the character and morality of the younger generation. According to Nurhasanah et al. (2024), if students possess digital knowledge and skills, they will be able to maximize the benefits offered by technological media and the internet. However, if they lack these skills, they may face risks in keeping pace with technological advancements. The primary challenges in the digital world that can hinder character development in students include (Anisa Nurhasanah, Haldini Reygita, 2024);

- 1) Internet addiction, where children and teenagers spend a significant amount of time online playing games, watching videos, or using social media. This can lead to a loss of focus on learning, laziness in activities, insufficient sleep, and even a lack of direct social interaction. Over time, they may become individuals who are less disciplined, unproductive, and lack responsibility.
- 2) Technological illiteracy (Gaptek), not all students have good skills in using technology. Some do not know how to use learning applications, cannot distinguish between true or false information, and do not understand how to protect personal data. This makes them vulnerable to online scams, cyberbullying, and falling behind in education.
- 3) Cyberbullying, with social media, bullies can easily spread insults, taunts, and even slander without face-to-face interaction. Victims may experience mental stress, feel unsafe, and lose self-confidence. Such bullying severely damages students' character and psychological well-being.
- 4) Online sexual harassment: The internet provides a significant opportunity for sexual predators to approach children discreetly. They can disguise themselves, communicate through private messages, and send inappropriate content. If students are not educated about boundaries in digital interactions, they may become victims without realizing it.
- 5) Exposure to pornography: The open nature of the internet makes it easy for children and teenagers to find pornographic content, whether intentionally or not. This exposure is very dangerous because it can damage morals, reduce shame, and normalize behavior that is contrary to Islamic values.
- 6) Hoaxes: Students often cannot distinguish between true and false information. As a result, they may spread false news (hoaxes), believe misleading information, and lose their ability to think critically. This is very dangerous because it can shape a character that is easily influenced and unwise in making decisions.

The above issues can arise if there is no supervision when exploring the digital world. Children and teenagers are highly vulnerable to online content containing violence, pornography, hate speech, and permissive lifestyles that contradict social norms and Islamic principles. Due to the dominance of virtual communication, direct social interaction becomes weaker, which is an additional phenomenon emerging in the modern technological era. This situation leads to a society that is physically connected but emotionally and

socially isolated. As a result, moral values such as empathy, politeness, social responsibility, and cooperation are increasingly marginalized. According to Alianto (2023), this is due to the prevalence of social interactions that have shifted to virtual platforms. Alianto states that communication through text, emojis, images, and without physical presence can reduce empathy levels due to the lack of rich nonverbal elements in conveying feelings and intentions (Alianto, 2023).

Moreover, in the virtual world, it is easy for someone to hide their true identity. Many people, especially teenagers, tend to build their self-image based on social recognition, which does not always align with the principles of truth and honesty. This is compounded by social media algorithms that are tailored to individual perspectives and create social gaps in terms of opinions and experiences.

Furthermore, excessive use of technology has the potential to cause digital addiction, which affects productivity, time management skills, and self-discipline. According to data from the Indonesian Child Protection Commission (KPAI) in 2024, more than 71.3% of school-aged children own gadgets, and 79% of them use them not only for learning but also for entertainment without supervision. This highlights how digital addiction has become a serious challenge requiring special attention. In the process of character education, dependence on digital devices can disrupt the balance between cognitive, affective, and psychomotor components. Thus, the issue of character development in the digital world is not solely about technology. It is also about how students are educated to use technology wisely and responsibly. In such situations, Islamic education becomes crucial in building a strong foundation of values so that the younger generation can navigate the technological era without losing their identity and dignity.

### **Islamic Education Strategies in Responding to Digital Challenges**

Islamic education in the digital age faces complex challenges and opportunities. Advances in information technology have brought significant changes in the way Islamic teachings are conveyed (Fauzan, I., 2023). On one hand, technology has opened up widespread access to religious resources such as the Quran, hadith, and classical Islamic literature, which can now be accessed globally with just a few clicks. This supports the transmission of Islamic knowledge and values in a faster, more flexible, and interactive manner (Asriani, A., Nurdin, N., & Askar, 2024).

However, digitalization also brings various serious challenges. Some of these include limitations in educational infrastructure, disparities in technology access between regions and social groups, and the reliability and authenticity of Islamic content circulating online. In addition, Islamic character education also faces issues such as technological distractions, cyberbullying, exposure to negative content, digital radicalism, and weak supervision from parents and teachers (Hasniati, H., Mashfufah, K., Alfirdo, T., & Sari, 2025).

According to Habibulloh & Ali (2024), various strategies are suggested to address these challenges, as follows:

- 1) Strengthening digital literacy based on Islamic values

to enhance students' ability to use technology critically, ethically, and responsibly, grounded in Islamic teachings. Implementing this by incorporating Islamic values such as proper social media etiquette, for example, honesty and responsibility in digital literacy materials. Some solutions to address challenges in implementing digital literacy in Islamic education include: First, digital literacy can be utilized as a learning tool. In the context of Islamic education, digital literacy should be used to support the teaching and learning process, considering that reading interest among students and university students is currently declining. Many of them are unaware of the importance of literacy in daily life. Second, strengthening technological infrastructure in Islamic educational institutions, as adequate technological facilities will greatly assist in improving students' digital literacy skills. Third, designing a suitable digital literacy curriculum. Fourth, developing more creative and innovative learning methods. Fifth, improving the competence of teachers and educators so that they are able to optimize the use of digital literacy in learning (Hasanah & Sukri, 2023).

- 2) Wise integration of technology into the Islamic education curriculum

To adapt the teaching and learning process to technological developments without losing the essence of Islamic education, it can be implemented by integrating technological applications such as interactive tools, educational videos, and designing a curriculum that combines technological proficiency with an understanding of Islamic values. One example is: First, utilizing digital platforms to facilitate interactive and collaborative learning in understanding Islamic teachings. By utilizing online platforms, students can access Islamic religious education materials flexibly and independently, without being limited by time and location. This will expand the reach of Islamic religious education to remote areas that were previously difficult to access through conventional education systems. Second, providing interactive and collaborative content, such as educational videos, interactive simulations, and online discussions, to increase student engagement in understanding Islam. This will encourage students to actively participate in the learning process because the information is presented in an engaging manner (Haniefia et al., 2024).

- 3) Developing technology-based learning models such as e-learning, blended learning, and mobile learning. To improve access and quality of Islamic education with a flexible and adaptive approach. How to Implement It E - Learning involves creating a specialized Islamic education learning platform (e.g., book studies, fiqh, tafsir) that is interactive. Blended learning combines face-to-face learning with online learning, such as live lectures accompanied by online in-depth materials. Mobile learning involves developing Islamic mobile applications, such as prayer reminders, daily tafsir, and Islamic education quizzes, so that learning can be accessed anytime.
- 4) The role of teachers, parents, and educational institutions in supervising and guiding students, particularly in the ethical and responsible use of technology (Habibullah, 2023).

Furthermore, Islamic education in the digital age should be directed not only toward pursuing technological advancement but also toward strengthening the moral and spiritual dimensions of students (Hasniati, H., Mashfufah, K., Alfirdo, T., & Sari, 2025). This can be achieved through synergistic collaboration between schools and families, strengthening digital ethics education, and emphasizing the development of Islamic character in all aspects of learning, both formal and non-formal. Thus, Islamic education can remain relevant and highly competitive amid changing times, without losing the essence of the core Islamic values that form its foundation (Asriani, A., Nurdin, N., & Askar, 2024)).

### **The Relevance of Islamic Education in Formal Educational Institutions**

Islamic religious education in Indonesia has a strong legal basis, both explicit and implicit, as stipulated in various applicable laws and regulations. These provisions provide a solid foundation for the implementation of religious education in formal educational institutions. Religious education is an integral part of the national education system, making an important contribution to shaping the character of students based on the values of faith and piety.

In the National Education System Law (UU Sisdiknas) of 2003, national education is described as an educational process based on the ideology of Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution. This education is rooted in the noble values of religion, Indonesian national culture, and is adaptive to the dynamics of the times. This means that national education not only accommodates cognitive and skill aspects but also instills spiritual and moral values consistent with the nation's identity (Undang-Undang Sistem Pendidikan Nasional No 20 Tahun 2003, n.d.).

The national education system encompasses all interconnected elements and is designed to achieve national education goals comprehensively. Its implementation is universal, meaning it is accessible to all segments of society without discrimination and applies to all regions of the country. Additionally, the system is comprehensive as it covers all education pathways, including formal, non-formal, and informal education, as well as all levels and types of education. Finally, the system is integrated because national education is closely related to overall national development, forming a synergy between education and national development efforts.

According to Daulay (2012), to place Islamic education proportionally within the national education system, it is necessary to classify it into three main aspects. First, Islamic education as an institution that includes four types of institutions: formal, non-formal, informal, and religious. Formal institutions include educational levels from early childhood to higher education. Early childhood education can take the form of a Kindergarten (TK) or Raudhatul Athfal (RA). Basic education includes Elementary School (SD), Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI), as well as Junior High School (SMP) and Madrasah Tsanawiyah (MTs). The secondary level includes Senior High School (SMA), Madrasah Aliyah (MA), Vocational High School (SMK), and Madrasah Aliyah Kejuruan (MAK). Higher education can be conducted in the form of Academies, Polytechnics, Colleges, Institutes, or Universities.

Second, Islamic education as a non-formal institution includes various educational units conducted outside the formal school system, such as training institutions, skill training programs, study groups, community learning centers, and religious study circles. These institutions provide opportunities for the community to obtain education in a more flexible manner according to their needs. Furthermore, informal education encompasses learning processes that take place within the family and surrounding environment. In this context, learning activities are not structured but have a significant impact on the natural formation of character and spiritual values (Daulay, 2012).

Third, Islamic education as part of religious institutions is an education system run by the government or religious communities in accordance with applicable laws. Its main objective is to equip students with the ability to understand, appreciate, and practice their religious teachings, as well as to prepare them to become competent scholars or religious leaders. This religious education can be integrated into formal, non-formal, and informal channels. Its forms can be in the form of diniyah education, Islamic boarding schools, pasraman (for Hindus), pabhaja samanera (for Buddhists), and other forms that have similar functions and objectives (Arifin, 2003).



## CONCLUSION

Islamic education plays a strategic role in strengthening the character of the younger generation amid the challenges of the digital age. In addition to teaching religious teachings, Islamic education also instills universal moral and ethical values such as honesty, responsibility, and respect, which are important foundations in everyday life. The development of digital technology has indeed opened up broad access to information, but it also poses risks to character development, such as addiction, moral degradation, and declining social interaction. To address these challenges, Islamic education needs to actively adapt by integrating technology into the teaching and learning process, strengthening digital literacy based on Islamic values, and ensuring the involvement of families and educational institutions in supervising and guiding students. Islamic education in formal, non-formal, and informal institutions plays a crucial role in maintaining a balance between academic achievement, morality, and spirituality. With a comprehensive approach, Islamic education remains relevant as the primary pillar of character development amid the digitalization trend. To address the challenges of the digital age, Islamic education must strengthen digital literacy rooted in Islamic values so that students can use technology wisely. Collaboration between teachers, parents, and schools is essential to guide and supervise children in their use of digital media. Additionally, the use of technology as a tool for learning and da'wah should be enhanced through interactive and educational platforms. The government and educational institutions must ensure that Islamic education is implemented comprehensively and contextually at all levels, and build a supportive social environment—including digital spaces—that fosters Islamic character development.

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