

Digitalization of Islamic Education: Challenges to The Spirit of Humanistic and Transcendental Learning

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to analyze the challenges of digitalization to the spirit of humanistic and transcendental learning in Islamic educational institutions. Using a descriptive qualitative approach with the type of literature study and field observation, this study collects data from various reputable scientific literature as well as information from Islamic education practitioners as key informants. The analysis was carried out through content analysis techniques to dissect the phenomenon of cyber interaction in the context of tarbiyah. The results of the study show that digitalization triggers the mechanization of learning which reduces the role of teachers from *murabbi* figures (soul guides) to mere technical facilitators. Screen-mediated interactions create a "digital alienation" that organically inhibits the internalization of human manners and empathy. Furthermore, the cognitive-quantitative dominant digital evaluation system tends to ignore the inner transformation and transcendental awareness of students as servants of God.

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Keywords:

Digitalization;
Islamic Education;
Humanistic Learning;
Transcendental Learning.

INTRODUCTION

The fundamental transformation in the contemporary education landscape is fueled by the unstoppable penetration of digital technologies, creating a paradigm shift from conventional instruction to a platform-based ecosystem (Andryadi et al., 2025). This era of disruption has fundamentally changed the paradigm of education through a massive wave of digitalization (Sholeh et al., 2025), Where the integration of information technology in the classroom is no longer just a technical choice, but a global necessity that shifts traditional instruction towards more efficient digital platforms (Abdullah, 2025).

Ontologically, digitalization in Islamic education is understood as a restructuring of the way science is constructed and distributed, which places technology as *al-mutaghayyirat* (dynamic variables) that demands an operational redefinition in order for Islamic institutions to remain competitive (Anhanuri et al., 2024). However, this digital efficiency often clashes with traditional methodological aspects, where the speed of information tends to reduce the depth of contemplation that characterizes the transmission of knowledge in Islam (Hamid, 2023). The implication is that the unfiltered acceleration of technology has the potential to obscure the substance of science, where religious texts that should be studied in depth through dialectical contemplation, are instead presented as statistical data that is dry with philosophical meaning (Imamah, 2025).

Behind these technical efficiencies, there are concerns about the erosion of personal interactions that are the foundation of *the talaqqi tradition* and the process of *transfer of values*. This tension creates a gap between the demands of digital modernity and efforts to maintain the originality of fixed Islamic values (*tsawabit*) in the midst of the flow of change (Zailani & al., 2021). In the perspective of Humanistic Islamic Education, every educational process must be rooted in the glorification of human dignity as a *khalifatullah* who is equipped with fitrah to be developed through authentic dialogue (Z. Hidayat, 2019). Digitalization is a challenge for this paradigm when algorithms begin to replace the role of teachers' intuition in understanding students' psychological conditions (Ramadhani & Aripin, 2025; Zhang & Cao, 2025).

Reducing face-to-face interaction risks creating a mechanization of learning that distances students from the warmth of emotional relationships, so that Islamic education risks being trapped in the cognitive-administrative aspect alone (Nata, 2018a). This dehumanization in cyberspace creates a paradox; on the one hand technology expands the reach of digital da'wah, but on the other hand it reduces the figure of a teacher who should be *uswah hasanah* to a mere impersonal content operator (Z. Hidayat, 2019)

Ontological and methodological crises the tension between digital modernity and the originality of *tsawabit* (fixed) values in Islamic education creates a profound ontological crisis. When technology is positioned as a dynamic variable (*al-mutaghayyirat*), it often imposes a logic of speed and efficiency that clashes with *the tradition of talaqqi* that demands serenity (*tuma'ninah*) as well as depth of contemplation. Without a strong philosophical filter, the acceleration of information in cyberspace will actually reduce sacred religious texts to mere statistical data that is dry of meaning. The implication is that the process of scientific transmission no longer touches the aspect of *wisdom*, but only stops at cognitive-administrative satisfaction (Ari Rahmatullah Fauzi et al., 2025). This phenomenon emphasizes that digitalization is not just a change in the medium, but a challenge to the epistemological sovereignty of Islamic education in maintaining its spirituality essence in the midst of global information noise.

Furthermore, the urgency of maintaining this value is closely related to the transcendental dimension that views intellectual activity as a form of worship to achieve *taqarrub* to Allah. In this framework, knowledge is not just an informative commodity, but light (*nur*) that requires spiritual readiness (Asrori, 2022a). The success of education is no longer measured by mere technical proficiency, but by the inner transformation of students towards the level of wisdom or *wisdom*. However, the reality on the ground actually reveals the symptoms of "digital *alienation*", in which the process of internalizing morals stops at the distribution of material without being accompanied by a deep dialectic. This condition systematically leads to the degradation of empathy and the loss of spiritual presence in virtual learning spaces,

which distances learners from the essence of education as a process of character enhancement (Juliani et al., 2025). This inequality shows that digital sovereignty in Islamic education has not been fully able to touch the metaphysical niches of spirituality. Digital media tends to be trapped in an exoteric external dimension, thus failing to facilitate the esoteric experience needed in the process of purifying the soul (*tazkiyatun nafs*) of students in the midst of information noise (Sa'ida & al., 2024).

The phenomenon of knowledge commodification in the digital space has also exacerbated the challenge to the spirit of Islamic education, where religious content is often reduced to instant and popular material in pursuit of engagement metrics. In this ecosystem, the scholarly authority that should be built through the depth of sanad and academic perseverance risks being displaced by fragmentary narratives that prioritize visual aesthetics over the substance of value (Hamid & al., 2023). In addition, aspects of digital ethics or *adab al-ikhtilaf* in cyberspace are crucial but often overlooked in the current digital curriculum. Freedom of expression on digital platforms often leads to moral degradation and empathy, which is fundamentally contrary to the principles of Islamic humanism which prioritizes politeness and respect for the dignity of others (A. Hidayat & al., 2022). Without the integration of prophetic values in digital literacy, students will be trapped in a transactional and confrontational communication pattern, thus distancing them from the goal of education as a process of character improvement (Nata, 2018b).

The impact of dehumanization and digital alienation Furthermore, the mechanization of learning in the digital era triggers the phenomenon of "digital alienation" that threatens the emotional relationship between teachers and students. The massive distraction of entertainment features in digital devices often breaks the chain of moral internalization that should occur through the inner dialectic (Junaidi et al., 2023). When algorithms begin to take over the role of the teacher's intuition in understanding the psychological condition of students, the *process of ta'dib* undergoes systematic dehumanization. Educators risk being relegated to mere impersonal content operators, depriving them of the spiritual touch that is the soul of Islamic education. This condition creates a paradox; Where access to religious literacy is

increasingly democratic and widespread, but at the same time, the quality of character and spiritual depth of students are actually degraded due to the loss of the presence of a *murabbi* figure who is able to provide a real example (*uswah*).

In the context of pedagogy, the transition to virtual space requires a reorientation to the concept of *presence* that is not only physical, but also metaphysical. Traditional Islamic education emphasizes that the blessings of knowledge are born from the spiritual closeness between teacher and student, a dimension that is difficult to accommodate by cold monitor screens (Asrori, 2022b). The transcendental challenge here lies in how to create an atmosphere of "academic solemnity" in the midst of massive digital distractions, so that the learning process is still seen as a path of devotion to God, not just an administrative obligation (Salsabila et al., 2024). If Islamic education only focuses on infrastructure adaptation without touching the essence of *tarbiyah al-ruah*, then digitalization will actually be a catalyst for the birth of a digitally intelligent generation but experiencing an existential emptiness (Juliani et al., 2025). Therefore, a conceptual framework is needed that is able to bridge technological efficiency with humanistic warmth (Sa'ida, 2024).

Therefore, a conceptual framework is needed that is able to bridge technological efficiency with humanistic warmth (Indriani & Adam, 2025), masih terdapat kekosongan penelitian (*research gap*) yang secara holistik mensintesis benturan digitalisasi dengan spirit humanistik dan transendental dalam satu bingkai filosofis yang utuh (Fernando et al., 2024).

This is where the novelty of this research lies, namely in the effort to formulate the synthesis of technology as an instrument to strengthen spirituality through the transformation of the role of educators into "digital mursyids" (Sa'ida, 2024). The transformation of Islamic education in the digital age demands innovative adaptations while maintaining moral-spiritual values to avoid teacher competency gaps (Indriani & Adam, 2025).

This is where the *novelty* of this research lies, namely in the effort to formulate the synthesis of technology as an instrument to strengthen spirituality, not to be an obstacle (Sa'ida & al., 2024). Based on this background, the research entitled

"Digitalization of Islamic Education: Challenges to the Spirit of Humanistic and Transcendental Learning" is very relevant to be conducted To respond to this research gap.

To respond to this *research gap*, this study focuses on three main objectives. First, critically analyze the dialectic of the transformation of Islamic education from *the talaqqi* (physical presence) method to digital interaction, especially related to the shift in scientific authority and its epistemological implications on the authenticity of value transmission. Second, reconstructing the role of *murabbi* in the digital learning ecosystem to formulate an adaptive teaching model, without reducing the spiritual function of educators in the midst of the dominance of digital humanism. Third, investigating the phenomenon of erosion of students' spirituality and offering a mitigation framework that is able to balance technological acceleration with transcendental needs. Integratively, the achievement of these three goals is projected to produce a conceptual framework that is applicable to policymakers and educators in building a digital Islamic education ecosystem that remains rooted in divine and humanitarian values.

METHOD

This research used a qualitative approach with a phenomenological study type that aims to uncover the essence of the experience of educators and students in facing digital disruption, in line with the need to reconstruct the *techno-humanistic* paradigm in Islamic education (Maulidi et al., 2025). The focus of the research is directed at how the research subjects interpret humanistic and transcendental values in the midst of the massive use of digital platforms that often reduce affective and spiritual aspects. The primary data sources or primary data are obtained directly through key informants, namely Islamic religious education teachers and education practitioners who have integrated technology but still strive to maintain the religious character of students, while secondary data is obtained through curriculum documents and policy reports relevant to digital transformation in Islamic educational institutions.

Data collection techniques were carried out through participatory observation and structured in-depth interviews (Haryono et al., 2024), to explore the informant's

subjective understanding of the existential challenge in maintaining the spirit of transcendence in cyberspace. This process is strengthened with *purposive sampling* techniques to ensure that the data obtained comes from subjects who actively implement humanistic theories in learning in the digital age.

Data analysis is operationalized through an interactive analysis model which includes the stage of data condensation, narrative presentation of data to conclusion drawing (Miles et al., 2018) which is based on a critical reflection on the dialectic between technological efficiency and the preservation of human values. In order to ensure the validity of the data, the researcher applies credibility standards through the extension of observation and triangulation techniques in which the data of the interview results are confronted with the results of field observations to ensure the accuracy of the findings regarding the effectiveness of internalizing character values in the digital ecosystem.

RESULTS

The findings of this study are a synthesis of the process of in-depth observation, interviews with educators, and analysis of curriculum documents at institutions that implement digitalization. The data showed a significant shift in the pattern of teacher-student interaction as well as the challenge of maintaining the intensity of transcendental values in the virtual space. The following is a summary of the main findings organized by research focus as there is the following table:

Table 1. Research Findings Table

Research Focus	Key Findings	Data Source
The Humanistic Essence in the Digital Space	Digitalization tends to reduce personal interaction (<i>ta'dib</i>) to transfer technical information (<i>ta'lim</i>).	PAI Teacher Interviews; Virtual Class Observation
Spirituality and Transcendental Values	Difficulties in internalizing <i>solemnity</i> and spiritual values through screens, due to the distraction of digital entertainment features.	Self-Evaluation Documentation; Student Interviews
Technology-Spiritual Integration Strategy	The use of a <i>blended-transcendental model</i> that combines application efficiency	RPS documentation;

	with periodic physical encounters for character strengthening.	Observation of Religious Activities
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DISCUSSION

The Dialectic of Islamic Humanism: The Transformation from the Talaqqi Tradition to Digital Interaction

Islamic education is based on the foundation of *ta'dib* which places personal interaction between *murabbi* and students as a sacred value transfer process. The concept of *ta'dib* promoted by al-Attas (1980) emphasizes that education is not just the transmission of knowledge (*ta'lim*), but the development of manners and the cultivation of divine values holistically. However, along with the unstoppable penetration of technology (Andryadi et al., 2025), There is a paradigm shift from conventional instruction to a platform-based ecosystem that tends to be mechanistic. This digital transformation has profound philosophical implications, where the humanistic and spiritual dimensions in Islamic education are in danger of being degraded to mere transactional procedures.

This shows that digitalization in Islamic educational institutions actually reduces the depth of the meaning of the interaction to just a transfer of technical information or *ta'lim*. The learning process that is reduced to the exchange of digital data without a personal touch can erode the essence of Islamic education which emphasizes character formation (*tarbiyah*) and spirituality (*tazkiyah al-nafs*). These findings confirm the symptoms of "mechanization of learning" that Hidayat et al. feared. (2023), where the presence of soul and exemplary (*uswah*) is reduced by rigid digital data transactions. E-learning platforms, while efficient in disseminating materials, often fail to capture the emotional and spiritual dimensions that are at the core of the teacher-student relationship in the tradition of classical pesantren and madrassas.

Thus, the facts in the field show that the technical efficiency offered by digital platforms has not been able to replace the essence of *tarbiyah al-ruh*, so it is necessary to redefine the role of teachers so that they are not trapped as mere device operators, but remain a moral compass in cyberspace. Mujib's (2020) research confirms that

without the reconstruction of the role of teachers as spiritual facilitators, digitalization will only create a generation that is "technologically literate" but "meaning-blind."

This gap between technical efficiency and spiritual depth is exacerbated by the minimal influence of technology on strengthening transcendental character. This leads to a void of meaning in virtual learning spaces. This challenge triggers the urgency to not only reject digitalization, but to carry out a creative synthesis that places technology as an instrument to strengthen spirituality (Malik et al., 2025; Shobirin et al., 2025). An integrative framework that combines ease of access to technology with learning methods based on Islamic values can be achieved through a holistic approach that balances digital innovation with Islamic ethical principles (Mawardi, 2025; Syahrani, 2025).

Therefore, it is necessary to fundamentally transform the role of educators from just technical teachers to "*digital mursyid*". Through this role, educators are expected to be able to bridge democratic access to religious literacy while maintaining the spiritual aspects of students, so that the integration of technology in Islamic education continues to humanize humans and be oriented towards divine values. This approach is in line with the vision of Islamic education that not only produces intellectually intelligent individuals, but also spiritually mature and civilized in social-digital interaction.

Reconstruction of Murabbi's Role in the Framework of Digital Humanism

Islamic humanistic education views students as subjects who have transcendental nature and divine potential that must be developed holistically (Syahrani, 2024). In this perspective, education is not just a cognitive process, but a spiritual transformation that touches the deepest psychological dimension. Findings regarding the mechanization of *tarbiyah* show that the role of teachers as soul touchers (*murabbi*) is beginning to be replaced by algorithms that are only able to process data without understanding the essence of humanity. This phenomenon reflects the degradation of the function of education from character formation to a mere impersonal transfer of information (Hamzah, 2025).

This discussion is not entirely in line with the optimism of the theory of connectivity, which considers that information networks are sufficient to form competences. Although Sulaeman (2024) acknowledges that the connectivity paradigm allows for broad access to Islamic knowledge sources through digital connectivity, researchers argue that digital networks only provide data, not meaning. Technology can present thousands of hadiths and interpretations, but without the guidance of *a murabbi* who has spiritual sensitivity, students will find it difficult to internalize these values into real life. Therefore, teachers in the digital era must transform into "spiritual curators" who are able to provide a humanistic context to every digital information, filter relevant content, and direct students to deep and meaningful understanding (Ardiansyah & Nugroho, 2025).

Thus, digitalization requires teachers to have *double-competence skills*: technologically proficient but still solid in moral and emotional integrity. As emphasized in the study of teachers' moral dilemmas in the digital age, technological transformation presents a new ethical challenge that requires a balance between digital competence and moral steadfastness (Wirawan, 2024). Teachers are not only required to master digital platforms and online learning methods, but also must be role models in the ethical and meaningful use of technology. This dual competency includes high technological literacy as well as the capacity to instill transcendence values in every learning interaction.

Furthermore, the failure of digital media in facilitating esoteric experiences such as purification of the soul (*tazkiyatun nafs*) emphasizes that technology tends to be trapped in the purely exoteric external dimension. Research on the concept of *tazkiyatun nafs* Al-Ghazali shows that the process of self-purification requires intensive mentoring, self-control, and spiritual development that cannot be replaced by digital interaction (Rohmah et al., 2024). Without the spiritual presence of teachers who are able to penetrate metaphysical niches, students will experience an existential emptiness in the midst of information noise. This is in line with the findings that Islamic values such as *tawhid* and *tazkiyatun nafs* serve as an essential foundation in dealing with psychological distress due to digital fatigue (Sholihah et al., 2024).

Therefore, digital sovereignty in Islamic education must not only stop at infrastructure adaptation, but must touch the essence of *tarbiyah al-ruh* so that the process of internalizing morals does not stop at the impersonal distribution of materials. The transformation of the role of teachers into "*digital mursyids*" is the key to bridging technological efficiency with humanistic warmth that is able to humanize humans in a learning space that is increasingly saturated by algorithms.

The Erosion of Spirituality: The Contradiction between Media Efficiency and Transcendental Depth

The basic principle of Islamic education views intellectual activity as a form of worship to achieve *taqarrub* to Allah, which requires solemnity and deep focus (Salsabila et al., 2024). In the classical Islamic scientific tradition, the learning process cannot be separated from the spiritual dimension, where every search for knowledge (*thalab al-'ilm*) must be based on sincere intentions and full concentration as a form of servitude to Allah. This concept emphasizes that knowledge is not just a cognitive commodity, but a *mandate* that demands transcendental awareness in every stage of learning. However, the reality of using digital media in learning often creates "*digital alienation*" due to the massive distraction of entertainment features that accompany these devices (Rusdi et al., 2023).

This phenomenon is further exacerbated by the characteristics of social media and digital platforms designed to maximize engagement through notifications, recommendation algorithms, and viral content that instead shift the focus from the depth of learning to the consumption of superficial information. Recent phenomenological studies reveal that students in Islamic institutions experience the phenomenon of "*spiritual alienation*", where even though access to religious materials is getting easier, the depth of worship and understanding of religious authority is actually degraded (Manurung & Ray, 2025). The findings of this study reveal that students experience significant difficulties in internalizing spiritual values through screens, because the fragmentary nature of digital media tends to distance them from the depth of reflection. Learning that should be a moment of spiritual contemplation

(*tafakkur*) and contemplation of meaning (*tadabbur*) is reduced to a transactional interaction that is shallow and quickly passes.

This condition is exacerbated by the tendency of AI and digital technologies that simplify complex religious concepts into instant knowledge, potentially eliminating the emotional depth and transcendental dimension in Islamic spirituality (Malik et al., 2025). This proves that although the accessibility of religious literacy has increased across borders, the quality of moral internalization has actually been degraded. This paradox reflects what is called "*information abundance, meaning poverty*", in which students have unlimited access to religious texts but lose the ability to process them into life wisdom (*hikmah*).

This inequality emphasizes that digital sovereignty in Islamic education has not been fully able to touch the metaphysical niches of spirituality because digital media tends to be trapped in an exoteric external dimension. This condition causes a failure in facilitating the esoteric experience needed in the process of purifying the soul (*tazkiyatun nafs*) of students in the midst of information noise. Studies on the digital dilemma of Generation Z Muslims show that values such as *tawhid* and *tazkiyatun nafs* are essential foundations in dealing with psychological distress due to digital *fatigue* and constant distractions (Rahmawati & Kholis, 2025). Spiritual experiences such as *muraqabah* (self-introspection), *muhasabah* (self-evaluation), and *mujahadah* (the struggle against lust) require a depth of concentration and full presence that is difficult to achieve in a fast-paced and fragmented digital ecosystem.

If Islamic education only focuses on infrastructure adaptation without touching the essence of *tarbiyah al-ruh*, then digitalization will actually be a catalyst for the birth of a digitally intelligent generation but experiencing an existential emptiness. Therefore, a reorientation is needed to the concept of *presence*, which is not only physical, but also metaphysical, in order to create an atmosphere of "academic solemnity" in the virtual space.

CONCLUSION

Based on the researcher's analysis and discussion, this study can be concluded as follows: Digitalization in Islamic education has shifted sacred personal interactions into mechanistic ecosystems, thus reducing the essence of tarbiyah al-ruah to mere data transfer. The role of teachers as soul-touching murabbi is now replaced by algorithms, where students experience significant difficulties in internalizing spiritual values due to media fragmentation and digital distractions that create alienation. As a result, although the accessibility of religious literacy has increased, the quality of moral internalization has been degraded, so teachers are required to have dual competencies proficient in technology as well as solid in moral integrity to become spiritual curators who inject a humanistic context into digital information.

Based on these findings, the researcher formulated several suggestions, including: Islamic educational institutions should immediately create teacher training programs that combine digital skills and moral example. This is to prevent learning from becoming too mechanical. Islamic boarding schools and madrassas need to closely monitor digital platforms. Limit distracting features and have regular face-to-face reflection sessions. The goal is to reduce the loss of spirituality and the decline of students' morals. The next research focuses on developing a spiritual curatorial model based on digital humanism. Field trials to measure how effective it is to increase students' spiritual value instilling.

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