

Islamic Education in The Future: Strategies for Facing Challenges and Opportunities

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Volume: 4 ISSN: 2963-5489	In the era of digital disruption and globalization, Islamic Religious Education (PAI) faces significant challenges, including shifting social values, moral decline, and the rapid spread of uneducational content. These dynamics require a strategic transformation to ensure that PAI remains relevant and effective in guiding a generation grounded in strong spiritual values while equipped with essential life skills. This study aims to formulate an integrated framework for transforming PAI by incorporating six key pillars: religious moderation, knowledge integration, critical thinking, character development, technology utilization, and multi-stakeholder collaboration. The research employs a qualitative-descriptive approach based on literature analysis and current educational trends to explore innovative strategies for strengthening PAI. The main contribution of this study is the presentation of a practical and adaptable model that not only fosters religious devotion, but also cultivates noble character, tolerance, and adaptability in students. This framework is expected to serve as a valuable reference for educators and policymakers in integrating Islamic values with 21st-century competencies.
KEYWORD	
Islamic Religious Education, Digital Disruption, Religious Moderation, Educational Transformation, Educational Reform	

1. Introduction

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in Indonesia serves as the primary foundation for shaping individual character and morality. Its role has become increasingly significant in the midst of digital disruption and globalization, which have triggered shifts in social values, moral decline, and the rapid spread of non-educational content through digital platforms. These dynamics highlight the urgent need for PAI to undergo reform in order to remain relevant and capable of equipping younger generations with strong spiritual foundations and adaptive skills for the modern era.

This context calls for a fundamental transformation of PAI. The focus should not only be on the transmission of religious knowledge but also on fostering integrity, moderation, and adaptability. The current educational model requires innovation to respond effectively to contemporary challenges. On the one hand, PAI must preserve the essential values of religion as a moral compass. On the other, it must embrace modern pedagogical approaches, harness digital technology, and strengthen collaboration with various stakeholders. Without such transformations, PAI risks losing its relevance and failing to fulfill its role in nurturing a strong national character.

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2. Literature Review

The rapid development of artificial intelligence (AI) from 2020 to 2025 has opened new horizons in childhood education. Various studies have examined the dynamics of PAI in Indonesia, highlighting both the challenges and opportunities it faces. Much of the literature over the last decade shows that PAI stands at a crossroads between tradition and modernity, necessitating adaptation. Vita Fitriatul Ulya, for example, highlights how globalization poses significant challenges for PAI, particularly in addressing the degradation of national character. Her research emphasizes the importance of PAI's adaptation to social, technological, and environmental developments in order to produce a generation that is both faithful and knowledgeable (Ulya, 2018). Similarly, Budi Johan et al. describe PAI as a blend of tradition and modernity, with the main challenge being the preservation of core religious values amid secularism and rapid change (Johan et al., 2024). On the other hand, Syukron Jamal argues that PAI continues to face fundamental challenges such as limited funding, inadequate infrastructure, and low digital literacy (Jamal, 2025). Meanwhile, Hernawati and Dewi Mulyani emphasize the challenges of PAI in the Society 5.0 Era, where education is expected to enhance spiritual and emotional intelligence amid rapid transformation (Hernawati & Mulyani, 2023).

Although these studies have explored the challenges of PAI from various perspectives, there has been limited research that comprehensively formulates a holistic model for PAI reform. This study seeks to address this gap by offering an integrated framework. The proposed model not only identifies existing problems but also integrates key elements, including religious moderation, integration of knowledge, critical approaches, character building, technological utilization, and multi-stakeholder collaboration. The main scientific contribution of this research is the development of an innovative model to strengthen PAI, aiming to produce individuals who are not only religiously devout but also virtuous, tolerant, and adaptive in the modern era.

3. Methodology

The author conducted the study under the qualitative research approach, specifically employing a library research design. Accordingly, the data collection relied on literature sources, with data obtained from books and scholarly references such as national and international journal articles published in the last decade (2015–2025) and indexed in databases such as Google Scholar and Semantic Scholar (Hafsah. Rusydi & Himmawan, 2023).

Furthermore, the data collected are qualitative in nature, aiming to present and analyze information relevant to the research focus. This means that the study examined sources such as books, journals, and other documents, which served as primary data in exploring issues related to the transformation and future objectives of Islamic Religious Education.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Challenges in Islamic Education

According to Zakiah Darajat, Islamic education is a system of activities designed and implemented to realize Islamic values and shape Muslim individuals in accordance with Islamic teachings (Johan et al., 2024). Like any education system, Islamic education faces various challenges. It must maintain quality, adapt to global conditions, and promote inclusivity and participation in responding to ongoing transformations.

Moreover, technological advances have rapidly transformed the world, while globalization further poses challenges for Islamic education. Today and in the future, Islamic education must address the combined pressures of globalization, technological and scientific progress, and moral decline (Sabtina, 2023). In other words, Islamic education must adapt to global changes, utilize advances in science and technology, and strengthen students' moral and spiritual foundations to ensure its continued relevance in both present and future contexts.

According to Abuddin Nata, Islamic Religious Education (PAI) should ideally function not only as a means of disseminating religious knowledge but also as a tool for social transformation, shaping individuals with both religious awareness and social sensitivity. Religious education is not limited to reading verses and hadiths; it also involves building character grounded in justice, tolerance, and humanity (Nata, 2003).

Reform of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) is not merely a change in curriculum or teaching methods; it represents a paradigm shift in the very nature of religious education (Hadi Zain et al., 2025). First, radicalism and intolerance constitute key challenges that necessitate reform. The persistence of narrow and exclusive religious views in certain community groups indicates shortcomings in the PAI system in emphasizing moderation and diversity. Second, the dichotomy between religious and general knowledge remains problematic. This disconnect often positions PAI as a separate subject perceived as less relevant to daily life. Third, advances in digital technology have transformed the way people learn and access information. To remain contextual and engage younger generations effectively, PAI must adapt to these technological changes. Fourth, the crisis of moral and social ethics persists. Although Indonesia is a religious nation, ethical and moral practices in society often fail to align with religious values. This highlights the need for PAI to play a stronger role in instilling moral values.

These challenges demonstrate that the reform of Islamic Religious Education is an urgent necessity rather than a mere option. Without a comprehensive reform agenda, PAI risks losing its relevance in addressing contemporary realities marked by radicalism, knowledge dichotomy, digital disruption, and moral decline. Therefore, it is essential to formulate concrete strategies for PAI reform that can strengthen its role, ensuring that Islamic education not only preserves religious values but also contributes to building a tolerant, adaptive, and morally grounded generation.

4.2 Reformation Strategy PAI

Some of the main principles that must underlie the reform of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) are, first, Religious Moderation (Wasathiyah), which emphasizes instilling a moderate, tolerant, and respectful attitude toward differences. In PAI reform, religious moderation serves as an essential foundation to shape a generation that is not only religious in rituals but also socially mature and civilized in facing contemporary challenges.

Second, the Integration of Knowledge: PAI should be connected with general sciences to make learning more contextual and applicable in solving real-life problems. This integration can be realized through the development of thematic curricula, the application of interdisciplinary approaches, and the preparation of teaching materials that reflect Islamic values in the context of modern science. For example, Qur'anic verses on nature can be integrated with biology or ecology lessons to foster environmental awareness (Hadi Zain et al., 2025).

Third, the principle of Critical and Reflective Thinking aims to produce students who are not only normatively obedient but also intelligent in understanding, internalizing, and applying religious values in their lives. Students should be encouraged to think critically about religious texts and social realities so that they are able to take wise and solution-oriented stances.

Finally, the principle of Value- and Character-Based Education emphasizes the importance of shaping students with strong moral and spiritual integrity alongside intellectual intelligence (Muthmainnah et al., 2024). In facing current challenges, Islamic education must integrate character education as a core part of the curriculum, with the aim of fostering values such as honesty, responsibility, empathy, and perseverance, all of which are in line with Islamic teachings.

In summary, the reform of Islamic Religious Education requires a comprehensive strategy that combines religious moderation, integration of knowledge, critical-reflective thinking, and character-based education. By strengthening these principles, PAI will be able to address existing challenges while preparing students to become individuals who are religiously devout, morally upright, and socially responsible in the modern era.

4.3 Opportunities for Islamic Education

Islamic education has significant opportunities to impart knowledge through processes that must be accessible to all generations. As a system of internalizing Islamic knowledge and values, it aims to guide students toward happiness in this world and the hereafter (Johan et al., 2024). To be effective and widely accepted, Islamic education must be presented in ways that are relevant to contemporary contexts.

Looking ahead, the development of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) opens several strategic directions. First, digitalization and learning technology: PAI should become more engaging, accessible, and relevant to the digital world through e-learning platforms, interactive media, social networks, and Islamic educational applications. Social media, for instance, can serve as an effective medium to spread moral and spiritual values. As Nasrullah notes, the proper use of platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, or TikTok can enhance students' religious awareness when educational messages are conveyed in familiar and appealing formats. Similarly, the growing availability of Islamic-based applications—such as digital Qur'ans and hadith

databases—further demonstrates the potential of transforming religious content into digital and interactive forms. (Nasrullah, 2015).

Second, strengthening teacher competence: PAI teachers must possess not only religious knowledge but also strong pedagogical, digital, and social skills. Their role as educators, role models, and motivators is central to ensuring effective learning and character development.

Third, collaboration with families and communities: Islamic education cannot succeed solely within schools. Active involvement of families, religious institutions, and community leaders is vital to ensure the continuity of religious values between formal education and everyday life (Bassar et al., 2021).

Fourth, the use of advanced technology such as Artificial Intelligence (AI): In the era of Society 5.0, AI offers opportunities to design adaptive and personalized learning. By tailoring materials to students' cultural contexts and spiritual needs, AI can transform religious education from a mere transfer of knowledge into a meaningful learning experience. Nevertheless, the adoption of AI in PAI must be guided by ethical principles, prioritizing privacy, data protection, and the human touch. Teachers will remain indispensable as facilitators to ensure that technology serves Islamic values rather than undermining them. In sum, the opportunities for Islamic education in the future lie in its ability to integrate technology, enhance teacher competence, build collaborative networks, and adopt innovations responsibly. These opportunities, if properly managed, will strengthen the role of PAI in shaping a generation that is faithful, morally upright, and adaptive to modern challenges.

5. Conclusion

The transformation of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) is no longer merely an option but a necessity to ensure its relevance and effectiveness in shaping a nation characterized by faith, knowledge, and noble character. In the face of digital disruption, globalization of values, and the emergence of modern challenges such as radicalism, moral crises, and social disintegration, PAI must become more adaptive, inclusive, and integrative.

The development of PAI in the future includes the utilization of information technology such as e-learning and artificial intelligence alongside the enhancement of teacher competence in both pedagogical and digital aspects. In addition, adopting a multicultural approach that fosters tolerance and peace, as well as strengthening collaboration with families and communities, are equally essential. Ultimately, PAI is expected to produce a generation that is faithful, moral, intelligent, and resilient in facing contemporary challenges, grounded in the principles of religious moderation, integration of knowledge, and character building.

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