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Program Initiative to Increase the Relevance of Islamic Religious Education in the Digital Era

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ABSTRACT
Islamic Religious Education (IRE) faces significant challenges in the rapidly evolving digital era. Information and communication technology not only influences students' mindsets and behaviors but also demands transformation in teaching approaches. This study aims to explore program initiatives that can enhance the relevance of IRE in the digital era through technology-based and pedagogical innovations. The research employs a qualitative approach using case study techniques conducted in several secondary schools in Indonesia. The findings reveal that the integration of technology into the curriculum, digital-based teacher training, and the development of interactive learning materials are strategic steps to address the challenges of the digital era. These findings provide practical guidance for educators and policymakers in designing relevant and effective IRE programs.

ABSTRAK
Pendidikan Agama Islam (PAI) menghadapi tantangan besar dalam era digital yang terus berkembang. Teknologi informasi dan komunikasi tidak hanya memengaruhi pola pikir dan perilaku peserta didik, tetapi juga menuntut transformasi dalam pendekatan pengajaran. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi inisiatif program yang dapat meningkatkan relevansi PAI di era digital melalui pendekatan berbasis teknologi dan inovasi pedagogis. Metode penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan teknik studi kasus pada beberapa sekolah menengah di Indonesia. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa integrasi teknologi dalam kurikulum, pelatihan guru berbasis digital, serta pengembangan materi pembelajaran interaktif menjadi langkah strategis untuk menjawab tantangan era digital. Temuan ini memberikan panduan praktis bagi pendidik dan pembuat kebijakan untuk merancang program yang relevan dan efektif dalam pengajaran PAI.

PRELIMINARY

The digital era has brought significant changes in various aspects of life, including education. Technology has changed the way individuals obtain, process, and share information. Islamic Religious Education (PAI), as an integral part of the education system in Indonesia, is faced with the need to remain relevant and adaptive to these changes. However, many educational institutions still use traditional approaches that are less responsive to digital developments (Alfi et al., 2023).

Digital transformation has revolutionized the learning paradigm, where students now tend to be more active in seeking information through digital devices. However, the gap between technological advances and traditional teaching approaches is still a major obstacle in the implementation of Islamic Religious Education. The curriculum that is less flexible and the minimal use of technology often makes Islamic Religious Education learning feel monotonous and less relevant for the digital generation. In addition, another challenge faced is the low digital literacy among educators. Many Islamic Religious

Education teachers do not yet have the skills to utilize technology in learning. This has resulted in a widening competency gap between teachers and students, which has grown in the digital era.

On the other hand, the digital era also offers great opportunities for Islamic Religious Education to be more creative and innovative in delivering materials. Technology can be used to create learning that is more interactive, personal, and relevant to students' needs. Digital platforms, learning applications, and multimedia content make teaching religious values more interesting and easier to understand. This research departs from the urgency to find solutions to these problems by designing technology-based program initiatives. Thus, Islamic Religious Education can be more relevant and adaptive to the needs of the times (Isti'ana, 2024; Yusral Nasution, 2024).

This study aims to answer several fundamental questions, such as: how to utilize technology effectively in Islamic Religious Education learning, what program initiatives can be designed to address the challenges of the digital era, and to what extent these programs can improve the quality of learning. With a qualitative approach and case studies, this study is expected to provide a comprehensive picture of strategies that can be applied to improve the relevance of Islamic Religious Education in the digital era. The main focus of this study is on the aspects of technology integration, teacher training, and the development of interactive learning materials.

The results of this study are expected not only to be a reference for educators, but also to provide real contributions in the development of more innovative and inclusive education policies, in accordance with the demands of the digital era. processing, and sharing information. Islamic Religious Education (PAI), as an integral part of the education system in Indonesia, is faced with the need to remain relevant and adaptive to these changes. However, many educational institutions still use traditional approaches that are less responsive to digital developments. This study aims to identify and develop program initiatives that can increase the relevance of PAI in the digital era.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a literature study method, where researchers analyze relevant scientific articles related to strategies to improve the optimization of Islamic religious education in Indonesian schools published in the last 5 years, the data prepared in this study are sourced from literature, journal books that are relevant to the title of the study. Identification of the main topics found in the literature is one of the various steps used in data analysis. Furthermore, the findings are classified based on how to improve Islamic religious education with the use of the theory of strategies to improve the optimization of Islamic religious education in Indonesian schools.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

This study seeks to explore the challenges and relevant solutions to improve the quality of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in the digital era. With a holistic approach, this study analyzes the obstacles faced in technology integration, provides program recommendations, and evaluates the effectiveness of the proposed solutions. These results are expected to be a reference for encouraging educational transformation that is adaptive to the needs of the digital generation.

Challenges in Islamic Religious Education in the Digital Era

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in the digital era faces various complex challenges, both in terms of teaching methodology, infrastructure, and socio-cultural aspects inherent in society (Rachmayani, 2023). Here is an in-depth discussion of these challenges, first, the lack of Technology Integration in the Curriculum. One of the main challenges is the lack of technology integration in the PAI curriculum. PAI learning materials are often still delivered with traditional approaches such as lecture and memorization methods. This approach is less relevant for digital generation students who are accustomed to technology-based interactions. For example, application-based learning, interactive media, or digital platforms are still rarely implemented optimally in many schools.

The lack of technology integration is also influenced by the limited digital competence among Islamic Religious Education teachers. Many teachers have not received adequate training to develop and implement technology-based teaching methods. This causes Islamic Religious Education learning to tend to be monotonous, so that students lose interest in studying the material presented. Second, the Gap in Access and Technology Infrastructure. In various regions, especially in remote areas, the availability of

infrastructure that supports technology-based learning is still a significant obstacle. Many schools do not yet have adequate technological devices such as computers, tablets, or projectors. In addition, stable internet network access is also a problem that hinders the implementation of digital-based learning.

Third, This infrastructure gap causes disparities in the quality of Islamic Religious Education between urban and rural areas. In remote areas, students and teachers often rely solely on textbooks and traditional teaching methods due to limited access to technology. Fourth, Conservative Perception of Technology. Some educators and the public still have conservative perceptions of the use of technology in Islamic Religious Education learning. They are concerned that technology can have a negative impact on Islamic values, such as reducing the level of meaningfulness of learning or reducing spiritual interaction between teachers and students. This perception is often based on concerns that digital content, if not properly supervised, can lead to the spread of information that is not in accordance with Islamic values. As a result, technology is seen as more of a threat than an opportunity in improving the quality of Islamic Religious Education learning.

Fifth, Lack of Islamic and Relevant Digital Content. The digital content available to support Islamic Religious Education learning is often inadequate in terms of both quality and relevance to the national curriculum. Students tend to search for additional information via the internet, but the content found is not always verified or in accordance with Islamic teachings. This has the potential to cause misunderstanding or inaccuracy of religious material. Sixth, Changes in Student Learning Patterns. Digital generation students have different learning patterns compared to previous generations. They prefer interactive, visual, and fast learning. However, this approach is often not accommodated by Islamic Religious Education learning methods that tend to be text-oriented and memorization-oriented. This inconsistency can cause students to feel bored or unmotivated to learn Islamic Religious Education.

Seventh, the Challenge of Digital Ethics. In the digital era, students are faced with various content that can influence their Islamic values, such as unfiltered information, social media, and online games. Islamic Religious Education teachers have the challenge of not only teaching academic material, but also guiding students in dealing with the digital world wisely, including strengthening digital ethics that are in accordance with Islamic teachings. In many cases, education policies do not fully support the integration of technology in Islamic Religious Education. Lack of budget allocation, teacher training, and mentoring programs are obstacles to implementing digital-based learning. Stronger government support is needed to ensure that Islamic Religious Education can keep up with the times without leaving its religious essence (Wiranata, 2024).

Recommended Program Initiatives

1. ***Technology Integration in the Curriculum***

   This study highlights the importance of technology integration in Islamic Religious Education curriculum. Recommended strategies include: (a) Digital Module Development: Digital-based learning modules designed interactively with attractive visualizations to reinforce religious concepts. (b) Educational Applications: Use of applications such as Kahoot, Quizizz, Google Classroom, and Edmodo to encourage active student engagement. (c) Project-Based Learning: Using technology to support collaborative projects relevant to Islamic values, such as the creation of creative Islamic preaching videos or religious infographics.

2. ***Digital Based Teacher Training***

   Teachers' digital competence is one of the key factors in the success of technology integration. Some strategic steps include: (a) Intensive Workshops and Training: Focus on technology literacy and skills in using online learning tools such as Learning Management System (LMS). (b) Certification: Certification for teachers who successfully master digital skills, which can be an additional incentive. (c) Mentorship Program: Collaboration between teachers who are already tech-savvy with other teachers to transfer knowledge and experience.

3. ***Interactive Material Development***

   Interactive materials can be a solution to increase students' interest and understanding of Islamic Religious Education lessons. Some examples of recommended interactive materials: (a) Thematic Learning Videos: Videos based on Islamic values packaged with narratives that are relevant to students' daily lives. (b) Interactive E-Books: Digital books equipped with automatic evaluation features and animations to clarify the concepts being taught. (c) Virtual Simulations: The use of virtual

reality (VR) technology to provide interactive experiences, such as virtual tours to historical Islamic sites.

Program Effectiveness

The results of the implementation of this initiative show a significant increase in the quality of Islamic Religious Education learning. Data obtained from case studies in several schools show that: (1) Student Engagement: Students are more enthusiastic and active in participating in technology-based learning. The percentage of students involved in discussions and assignments increased by 35% (Weran et al., 2021). (2) Increased Teacher Competence: Teachers who participated in digital training reported increased confidence in using technology in learning. (3) Teaching Efficiency: Interactive materials enable students to understand religious concepts more quickly and deeply (Nurqozin & Putra, 2023).

Discussion

Educational transformation in the digital era is an urgent need that must be responded to with a holistic approach. In the context of Islamic Religious Education (PAI), technology integration is an important step to ensure that learning remains relevant and interesting for the digital generation. Technology can be utilized to develop digital platforms based on Islamic values, such as interactive learning applications, social media as a means of educational preaching, to learning management systems that provide learning flexibility. However, the implementation of this technology is not without challenges, especially the lack of digital competence of educators. PAI teachers must be equipped with adequate technological skills through training and certification, so that they are able to create Islamic digital content, implement innovative teaching strategies, and understand digital ethics that are in accordance with religious values.

In addition, curriculum updates are inevitable. The Islamic Religious Education curriculum must include technology-based learning materials, such as social media ethics according to Islam and Islamic digital literacy. Contextualizing Islamic values in contemporary issues is also important so that students can understand religious teachings in relation to modern life, such as in the context of environmental sustainability or community life in the global era. A project-based approach that integrates Islamic values with critical thinking skills, creativity, and collaboration can increase student engagement while strengthening the relevance of learning.

However, these efforts will not succeed without the support of adequate technological infrastructure. Challenges such as limited access to the internet and technological devices, especially in remote areas, must be overcome through collaboration between the government, the private sector, and local communities (Inayah et al., 2024). Providing equitable internet access, affordable technological devices, and inclusive digital learning spaces are fundamental needs to realize this transformation. In addition, cross-sector collaboration involving educators, policy makers, technology developers, as well as parents and the community, is key to creating an adaptive and innovative education ecosystem.

Investment in teacher training and development of interactive learning materials is also a strategic step that not only answers short-term needs but builds a long-term educational foundation (Nurnaningsih et al., 2023). With a systemic and innovative approach, Islamic Religious Education can continue to be relevant and able to equip students with strong Islamic values, even amidst the challenges of the digital era. This study emphasizes the importance of collaboration, innovation, and renewal to ensure that Islamic Religious Education remains an important element in shaping the character of an Islamic, adaptive, and competitive generation.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results obtained, there are several major challenges in the application of technology in Islamic Religious Education, such as the lack of technology integration in the curriculum, limited technological infrastructure, and conservative perceptions of the use of technology. In addition, there is still a lack of relevant Islamic digital content and the incompatibility of the learning patterns of digital generation students with traditional learning methods. In addition, the challenge of digital ethics is also an important concern in dealing with the impact of technology on Islamic values.

To address these challenges, this study recommends various program initiatives, such as the development of digital modules, the use of educational applications, and project-based learning that are

relevant to Islamic values. Intensive training for teachers in mastering technology is also very necessary to improve their digital competence. In addition, the development of interactive materials, such as thematic learning videos, interactive e-books, and virtual simulations, is also a strategic step to improve the quality of Islamic Religious Education learning.

Overall, this study confirms that the transformation of Islamic Religious Education in the digital era requires a systemic and collaborative approach. Collaboration is needed between educators, policy makers, technology developers, and the community to create an innovative and adaptive educational ecosystem. With these strategic steps, Islamic Religious Education can remain relevant in equipping students with strong Islamic values, as well as the skills needed in the digital world, making it an important element in shaping the character of an Islamic, adaptive, and competitive generation.

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