



DIGITAL RELIGIOUS COMMUNICATION IN AQIDAH AKHLAK LEARNING: FORMING STUDENTS' RELIGIOUS ATTITUDES AT MI PLUS AL MAHMUD BLITAR

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Abstract:

This study explores the integration of digital religious communication in Aqidah Akhlak learning to strengthen students' religious attitudes at MI Plus Al Mahmud Blitar. The rapid growth of digital media has transformed teacher-student interactions in Islamic education, requiring pedagogical strategies that integrate technological innovation with value-oriented instruction. Employing a qualitative descriptive approach, data were collected through classroom observations, in-depth interviews, and documentation involving Aqidah Akhlak teachers and students engaged in digital-based learning. The findings reveal that digital religious communication serves as a transformative pedagogical medium that enhances student engagement, spiritual awareness, and moral understanding. Teachers utilize digital platforms such as interactive videos, online discussions, and digital storytelling to internalize Islamic values in ways that resonate with students' digital lifestyles. The study concludes that integrating digital technology in Aqidah Akhlak learning is not merely a technical adaptation, but a form of spiritual pedagogical transformation that connects traditional Islamic values with contemporary digital contexts. These findings highlight the need for continuous teacher professional development in digital pedagogy to reinforce the effectiveness of Islamic education in the digital era.

Keywords: *Digital Religious Communication; Aqidah Akhlak; Learning, Religious Attitudes; Islamic Education; and Digital Pedagogy*

Abstrak

Studi ini mengeksplorasi integrasi komunikasi keagamaan digital dalam pembelajaran Aqidah Akhlak untuk memperkuat sikap keagamaan siswa di MI Plus Al Mahmud Blitar. Pertumbuhan pesat media digital telah mengubah interaksi guru-siswa dalam pendidikan Islam, sehingga membutuhkan strategi pedagogis yang mengintegrasikan inovasi teknologi dengan pengajaran yang berorientasi pada nilai. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan deskriptif kualitatif, data dikumpulkan melalui observasi kelas, wawancara mendalam, dan dokumentasi yang melibatkan guru dan

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siswa Aqidah Akhlak yang terlibat dalam pembelajaran berbasis digital. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa komunikasi keagamaan digital berfungsi sebagai media pedagogis transformatif yang meningkatkan keterlibatan siswa, kesadaran spiritual, dan pemahaman moral. Guru menggunakan platform digital seperti video interaktif, diskusi daring, dan penceritaan digital untuk menginternalisasi nilai-nilai Islam dengan cara yang sesuai dengan gaya hidup digital siswa. Studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa integrasi teknologi digital dalam pembelajaran Aqidah Akhlak bukan hanya adaptasi teknis, tetapi merupakan bentuk transformasi pedagogis spiritual yang menghubungkan nilai-nilai Islam tradisional dengan konteks digital kontemporer. Temuan ini menyoroti perlunya pengembangan profesional guru yang berkelanjutan dalam pedagogi digital untuk memperkuat efektivitas pendidikan Islam di era digital.

Keywords: Komunikasi Keagamaan Digital; Aqidah Akhlak; Pembelajaran, Sikap Keagamaan; Pendidikan Islam; dan Pedagogi Digital

INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of digital technology has reshaped various aspects of life, including religious education. Islamic education has increasingly experienced digital transformation, where learning interactions no longer occur solely in conventional classroom settings but also through online and digital platforms. The integration of digital communication into Islamic pedagogical practices offers new opportunities for interactive, contextual, and value-based learning. Nevertheless, this transformation also raises challenges, particularly in maintaining spiritual communication and preserving moral integrity within digitally mediated environments. In this context, the TPACK (Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge) framework plays a crucial role in enabling educators to integrate technology with pedagogy effectively, thereby creating meaningful learning experiences for students (Saili & Taat, 2023).

Within madrasah ibtidaiyah, Aqidah Akhlak serves as a foundational subject for shaping students' moral and spiritual development. Teachers are not merely knowledge transmitters but also moral role models whose communicative practices significantly influence students' religious attitudes. Prior studies indicate that digital media can support the internalization of ethical values across madrasah subjects, provided that teachers are able to communicate religious values effectively through digital means (Purwanto dkk., 2023). Therefore, teachers' competence in digital communication becomes essential to balance technological engagement with spiritual depth.

Although numerous studies have explored digital learning in Islamic education, a significant research gap remains concerning the dimension of

religious communication within digital learning environments. Existing research tends to emphasize technological effectiveness, instructional innovation, or student motivation, while paying limited attention to how faith, moral reasoning, and ethical dialogue are communicated and constructed through digital interactions (Zurqoni dkk., 2022). Moreover, studies highlight the need for educational frameworks that integrate traditional Islamic values with contemporary technological developments, particularly within madrasah contexts (Arif dkk., 2024). This gap underscores the necessity of investigating digital learning not only as a technical process but also as a communicative and spiritual practice.

The concept of digital religious communication provides a critical lens for understanding how technology mediates religious meaning. Digital media inherently carries specific values, aesthetics, and communication styles that influence how religious messages are conveyed and interpreted by students (Saili & Taat, 2023). When Islamic education is mediated through digital platforms, it affects not only instructional formats but also the reception and internalization of religious values. Consequently, digital communication should be understood not merely as a pedagogical tool, but as a cultural medium through which Islamic values are negotiated and embodied in students' everyday lives.

Indonesia represents a particularly relevant context for this inquiry as one of the world's largest Muslim-majority countries. The Ministry of Religious Affairs has promoted educational digitalization through initiatives such as *Madrasah Digital*, aiming to integrate technology into madrasah education (Zurqoni dkk., 2022). However, empirical evidence suggests uneven implementation among teachers: while some successfully integrate digital pedagogy with moral instruction, others struggle to adapt digital tools in ways that sustain spiritual values (Arif dkk., 2024). These findings indicate that innovation in Islamic education requires not only technological adoption but also a transformation in communicative practices aligned with Islamic ethical principles (Jannah dkk., 2020).

At the institutional level, MI Plus Al Mahmud Blitar represents a madrasah actively integrating digital learning with Islamic character education. The school's implementation of digital tools in Aqidah Akhlak instruction provides a valuable case for examining how religious communication is enacted in digitally mediated classrooms (Sholeh, 2023). Teachers' narratives and classroom practices illustrate how Islamic values are conveyed, adapted, and contextualized through digital interactions, reinforcing the role of educators as moral communicators in digital spaces (Zainuddin dkk., 2024).

This study investigates how Aqidah Akhlak teachers utilize digital media for religious communication, how such interactions influence students' moral and spiritual engagement, and what pedagogical strategies emerge from these practices. By focusing on communication rather than technology alone, this

research contributes to the intersection of digital pedagogy and religious communication, two areas that remain insufficiently integrated in prior studies (Astra dkk., 2024).

The novelty of this study lies in its conceptualization of digital religious communication as a pedagogical and spiritual process, rather than merely a technological support in Islamic education. While previous research has largely examined digital learning from technical or motivational perspectives, this study foregrounds the communicative processes through which Islamic values, moral reasoning, and religious attitudes are constructed in digital learning environments (Hudia dkk., 2023). Furthermore, by situating digital religious communication within Aqidah Akhlak learning at the madrasah ibtidaiyah level, this research addresses a context that remains underrepresented in the literature (Tusyana, 2022).

Empirically, this study offers original insights through a qualitative case study of MI Plus Al Mahmud Blitar, illustrating how digitalization policies in Islamic primary education are translated into everyday classroom communication. The findings advance understanding of how digital pedagogy can support the formation of students' religious attitudes across cognitive, affective, and spiritual dimensions (Tusyana, 2022).

In terms of implications, this research highlights the importance of strengthening teachers' digital communication competencies to ensure that technological integration in Islamic education remains ethically grounded and spiritually meaningful (Bentri dkk., 2022). It also underscores the need for policy and training programs that align digital literacy with moral and religious education (Fu & Satrianawati, 2022). Ultimately, this study contributes to the development of a model of digital pedagogy that reinforces students' moral frameworks while embracing contemporary educational innovation, supporting the formation of learners who are capable of integrating personal values and technology effectively (Amirova et al., 2023).

RESEARCH METHODS

This study aims to explore the contributions of digital religious communication to the formation of students' religious attitudes in Aqidah Akhlak learning at MI Plus Al Mahmud Blitar. Employing a qualitative descriptive approach, the research examines how digital media functions as a mediator in religious education by facilitating meaningful interactions that enhance students' understanding of moral values and Islamic teachings (Syaripudin dkk., 2024).

The research subjects were students of MI Plus Al Mahmud Blitar, who actively participated in digitally mediated Aqidah Akhlak learning activities. Meanwhile, the key informants consisted of Aqidah Akhlak teachers and the head of the madrasah, selected due to their direct involvement in the planning, implementation, and supervision of digital-based religious instruction.

The qualitative approach was intentionally adopted to capture the social realities and communicative dynamics embedded in digital religious learning, which are difficult to measure through quantitative methods. This method allows for an in-depth understanding of how religious values are communicated, interpreted, and internalized within the digital learning environment (Grigore & Maftai, 2025).

The environment at MI Plus Al Mahmud Blitar, recognized for its integration of technology into Islamic education, serves as an exemplary case for studying the impact of digital platforms on student learning. This selection underscores the idea that educational institutions that adopt digital strategies can effectively harmonize technological progress with character development in students (Syaripudin dkk., 2024). The purposive sampling of participants, including teachers and students engaged in digital platforms, allows for an in depth exploration of diverse experiences and perspectives, which is essential for qualitative research. Such selective sampling methods are vital in qualitative studies to ensure rich and relevant data collection (Arrinda Luthfiani Ayyzaro', 2020).

Data collection involved observation, semi structured interviews, and documentary analysis, aimed at capturing the dynamics of digital communication in the educational process holistically. Observations in both classroom settings and online platforms illuminate how teachers leverage digital tools to communicate moral values. In depth interviews were designed to encourage participants to articulate their experiences and perceptions regarding the use of digital media in learning (Sulvinajayanti dkk., 2024). Documentation, including digital artifacts and lesson plans, provides additional context and enriches the qualitative data, (Arrinda Luthfiani Ayyzaro', 2023) affirming the study's qualitative rigor and depth.

In sum, this investigation into the role of digital religious communication at MI Plus Al Mahmud Blitar emphasizes the transformative potential of digital media in shaping religious attitudes and values among students. The qualitative approach provides a robust framework to understand the intricate relationships between technology, education, and religious formation in contemporary contexts (Grigore & Maftai, 2025). Insights drawn from this study contribute meaningfully to broader discussions about digital religion, educational methodologies, and the cultivation of moral attitudes in Muslim educational settings.

In analyzing qualitative data collected during this study on digital religious communication and its effect on the learning of Aqidah Akhlak, the researcher employed the interactive model proposed by Miles and Huberman. This model facilitated systematic data reduction, display, and conclusion drawing, allowing for a thorough exploration of themes such as digital communication dynamics, teacher, student interactions, and the internalization of religious values. By organizing, coding, and categorizing the emergent data themes, the researcher was able to create a descriptive presentation that illuminated patterns and relationships

inherent in the mediating role of digital communication within religious education contexts (Waqfin & Rojab, 2022).

The iterative and reflective nature of this analytical process was critical, as data collection and analysis were interwoven to foster deeper interpretation. When new insights arose during analysis, the researcher returned to the field for clarification, ensuring the validity and depth of the interpretations were upheld (Syafi'i dkk., 2024). To enhance credibility, various validation strategies were implemented. These included prolonged engagement with the research environment, persistent observation, and triangulation of diverse data sources and methods, which collectively ensured robust and trustworthy findings (Ambarokah & Sinaga, 2023).

Furthermore, member checks and peer debriefing were utilized to confirm the accuracy of the interpretations, reinforcing the study's dependability and confirmability through meticulous documentation of each research phase (Syafi'i dkk., 2024). Rich, detailed descriptions emerged from this process, which improved transferability and allowed other researchers to evaluate the findings' applicability to similar contexts (Mahmudah dkk., 2022). Ethical considerations were paramount: permissions were secured from school administrators, informed consent was obtained from participants, and confidentiality was strictly maintained through the use of pseudonyms and secure data storage (Baharshah, 2022).

The comprehensive approach to data analysis undertaken in this study demonstrates the importance of rigor in qualitative research within educational settings, particularly in the context of religious education where digital tools increasingly play a significant role (Zainuddin dkk., 2024). Ethical integrity, methodological reflections, and a focus on robust validation strategies contribute significantly to the credibility and replicability of research findings in this field (Rahmawati dkk., 2020).

In this study, the researcher functioned as the primary instrument of data collection and interpretation. Reflexivity played a crucial role in maintaining objectivity, as the researcher's background in Islamic education could potentially influence the interpretation of data (Purwanto dkk., 2023). To address this, reflective notes were maintained throughout the research to record thoughts, assumptions, and methodological decisions. This reflexive practice ensured that findings were grounded in participants' authentic voices rather than researcher bias (Azizah dkk., 2024).

Through this methodology, the study sought to reveal how digital religious communication operates as a pedagogical and moral process in Islamic education (Ashari dkk., 2023). Rather than focusing solely on technological use, this research emphasized how digital interactions become a medium of meaning making, moral transmission, and faith embodiment among students (Zakiyyah dkk., 2023). Thus, the qualitative design provided a comprehensive lens to understand the

transformative potential of digital communication in cultivating religiosity within the *Aqidah Akhlak* learning framework at MI Plus Al Mahmud Blitar (Purwanto dkk., 2023).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on data obtained from classroom observations involving students of MI Plus Al Mahmud Blitar, in-depth interviews with *Aqidah Akhlak* teachers and the head of the madrasah, as well as document analysis, this study reveals that digital religious communication in *Aqidah Akhlak* learning plays a transformative role in shaping students' religious attitudes and moral behavior (Noprijon dkk., 2023). The integration of digital media has not only altered instructional delivery but has also created new spaces for moral dialogue and value internalization within formal learning contexts (Rohmawati dkk., 2024). Through observations of students' learning interactions and narratives gathered from teachers, several interrelated patterns emerged that demonstrate how digital communication functions as a pedagogical medium for cultivating religiosity among students (Yumna dkk., 2023).

The first major finding indicates that digital media serves as a bridge for moral engagement between *Aqidah Akhlak* teachers and students of MI Plus Al Mahmud (Purwanto dkk., 2023). In conventional classroom settings, moral messages were predominantly delivered verbally and in a unidirectional manner. However, findings from classroom observations and teacher interviews show that digitally mediated communication transforms moral instruction into a dialogical and participatory process (Damayanti dkk., 2022). *Aqidah Akhlak* teachers utilize platforms such as WhatsApp groups, Google Classroom, and interactive video-based learning to share short moral reminders (mauidzah hasanah), Qur'anic verses, and narratives related to prophetic ethics (Noprijon dkk., 2023). Students are encouraged to respond, reflect, and relate these values to their everyday experiences. This process enables a two-way moral exchange in which teachers act not merely as instructors but as mentors guiding students toward the internalization of faith-based practices (Rohmawati dkk., 2024).

Findings further demonstrate that digital religious communication promotes sustained moral engagement among students. Unlike traditional instruction that concludes when formal classroom time ends, digital platforms allow *Aqidah Akhlak* teachers to maintain communication beyond scheduled lessons (Yumna dkk., 2023). Teachers at MI Plus Al Mahmud Blitar send short reflective messages, share digital posters containing Islamic values, and encourage students to upload short videos demonstrating good deeds such as helping parents or performing prayers punctually (Noprijon dkk., 2023). Observational data suggest that these practices reinforce moral learning through repetition and real-life application, extending *Aqidah Akhlak* education beyond spatial and temporal boundaries (Damayanti dkk., 2022).

Another significant finding concerns the evolving role of Aqidah Akhlak teachers as digital religious communicators. Interviews with teachers and the head of the madrasah reveal that educators at MI Plus Al Mahmud Blitar have adapted their pedagogical roles by integrating technological competence with spiritual leadership. Teachers employ diverse digital materials designed to engage students both emotionally and cognitively, thereby transforming abstract moral concepts into relatable experiences. For instance, the use of animated videos to explain values such as sincerity (*ikhlas*) enables students to connect these concepts with their personal experiences, fostering deeper emotional engagement with moral teachings (Rohmawati dkk., 2024).

Teacher interviews consistently highlight the importance of creativity and reflexivity in designing digital religious content. Educators emphasize that effective religious communication requires an understanding of students' digital habits and preferences (Saenab dkk., 2022). One teacher remarked, "We must speak the same digital language as our students; only then will they listen," illustrating a shift in religious authority toward a model that values both religious knowledge and digital (Nursyahid & Mulyanti, 2024). This shift aligns with Kohlberg's theory of moral development, which emphasizes that meaningful engagement in ethical dialogue supports higher levels of moral reasoning.

The findings also reveal that integrating digital moral narratives—such as storytelling videos, digital comics, and animations—has become a key pedagogical strategy in Aqidah Akhlak learning at MI Plus Al Mahmud Blitar. Classroom observations indicate that these narratives often reflect moral dilemmas familiar to students, including honesty, respect, and perseverance. After engaging with such content, students are encouraged to share personal reflections, facilitating a transition from rote moral instruction to reflective moral reasoning (Romadlon dkk., 2023; Lidyawati dkk., 2023). This participatory learning environment supports students' movement from moral compliance toward deeper ethical understanding (MULIATI dkk., 2022).

Observational data further indicate that students of MI Plus Al Mahmud Blitar demonstrate higher levels of participation and self-expression in digitally mediated religious learning environments compared to conventional face-to-face instruction. This increased engagement supports findings from previous studies on technology-enhanced pedagogies in religious education (Šoltésová & Harastej, 2024). Digital platforms enable students to articulate religious reflections, connect moral teachings to personal experiences, and participate in collaborative discussions that deepen their spiritual understanding.

Moreover, digital religious communication fosters reflective religiosity among students. Through reflection journals and online discussions facilitated by Aqidah Akhlak teachers, students link religious teachings with personal moral challenges. For example, after lessons on gratitude (*syukur*), students often shared personal stories reflecting their struggles and growth in practicing gratitude, indicating

deeper internalization of religious values (Paskalis Edwin I Nyoman Paska & Laka, 2024). Such practices illustrate a shift from surface-level engagement toward sustained moral self-regulation and ethical development.

These findings align with contemporary educational theories that emphasize the integration of technology in shaping moral reasoning (Lunov & Ilin, 2025). By embedding religious values within digital communication, Aqidah Akhlak teachers create learning experiences that bridge Islamic teachings with students' lived realities. This integration strengthens students' capacity to navigate moral dilemmas in everyday life, reinforcing the relevance of religious education in a digitally mediated world.

At a broader level, this study highlights digital religious communication as a hybrid space where pedagogical and spiritual dimensions intersect (Saili & Taat, 2023). Interviews with teachers and the head of the madrasah reveal challenges such as unequal digital literacy among students and limited access to technology, which can affect engagement (Putra dkk., 2023). In response, educators at MI Plus Al Mahmud Blitar adopt adaptive strategies, including the use of short videos, memes, and simple digital content to embed moral messages in formats familiar to students (Hasriadi dkk., 2023). These strategies also reinforce digital etiquette (adab digital) as an integral component of Aqidah Akhlak education (Hasanah dkk., 2022).

Grounded in the concept of ta'dib proposed by Al-Attas, the findings affirm that digital communication can be pedagogically structured to cultivate students' religious attitudes holistically (Saili & Taat, 2023; Baharshah, 2022). Unlike prior studies that focus on general moral education or digital da'wah, this research situates digital religious communication within formal classroom learning, demonstrating its direct influence on students' moral and spiritual development (Baharshah, 2022).

Overall, the experience of MI Plus Al Mahmud Blitar illustrates how digitalization in Islamic primary education can support moral formation when guided by reflective pedagogical practices. Aqidah Akhlak teachers emerge as central actors in shaping "communicative spirituality," where language, symbols, and digital media collectively mediate the construction of religious meaning among students (Mansir, 2022; Simamora & Pasaribu, 2023). This model aligns with Indonesia's educational reform agenda under the Merdeka Belajar initiative, demonstrating that digital innovation and Islamic values can coexist within a coherent educational framework (Hadi dkk., 2023; Ramdhani dkk., 2021).

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that digital religious communication plays a pivotal and transformative role in Aqidah Akhlak learning at MI Plus Al Mahmud Blitar, particularly in shaping students' religious attitudes and moral behavior. Drawing on classroom observations, in-depth interviews, and document analysis, the

findings demonstrate that the integration of digital media extends Aqidah Akhlak education beyond conventional instructional practices toward a dialogical, participatory, and reflective moral learning process. Digital platforms enable continuous moral engagement, allowing religious values to be internalized through repeated interaction, real-life application, and reflective dialogue that transcends spatial and temporal boundaries of the classroom.

The findings further indicate that digitally mediated religious communication reconfigures the pedagogical role of Aqidah Akhlak teachers. Teachers no longer function solely as transmitters of moral knowledge but emerge as digital religious communicators who integrate technological competence with spiritual leadership. Through the creative use of digital narratives, interactive media, and reflective tasks, abstract moral concepts are transformed into relatable experiences that resonate with students' lived realities. This shift supports students' progression from surface-level moral compliance toward deeper ethical reasoning and self-regulated religiosity.

Moreover, the study reveals that digital religious communication fosters higher levels of student participation, self-expression, and reflective religiosity compared to conventional face-to-face instruction. Digital learning environments provide safe and engaging spaces for students to articulate moral reflections, connect Islamic teachings with personal challenges, and develop sustained moral awareness. These practices strengthen students' capacity to navigate everyday moral dilemmas, reinforcing the relevance of Aqidah Akhlak education in a digitally mediated world.

At a broader level, this research positions digital religious communication as a hybrid pedagogical-spiritual space grounded in the concept of ta'dib, where moral cultivation is intentionally structured through ethical digital engagement. While challenges such as unequal digital literacy and access persist, adaptive strategies adopted by teachers demonstrate that digitalization can support holistic moral formation when guided by reflective and context-sensitive pedagogical practices. By situating digital religious communication within formal Islamic primary education, this study contributes a novel empirical and conceptual perspective, highlighting "communicative spirituality" as a viable model for integrating Islamic values and digital innovation in contemporary education, in alignment with Indonesia's Merdeka Belajar reform agenda.

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