

The Digital Ummah: Islamic Religious Education as Pathway to Moral Integrity in a Connected World

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Abstract: This study addresses the paradox of the connected world era, where advances in information technology that should strengthen *ukhuwah* (brotherhood) have instead triggered a moral integrity crisis among the younger generation of the Digital Ummah. Phenomena such as cyberbullying, online gambling addiction, AI-based academic plagiarism, and disinformation reflect the weakening of religious ethics in digital spaces. The study aims to analyze the factors causing character degradation in the digital globalization era and to formulate the strategic role of Islamic Religious Education (PAI or *Pendidikan Agama Islam*) in rebuilding students' moral integrity. Using a literature review method with a descriptive qualitative approach, this research examines academic literature, reputable journals, and data from credible institutions such as KPAI, FSGI, and the World Economic Forum. The findings show that moral degradation is driven by online disinhibition, the hegemony of technological secularism, and the loss of *muraqabah* values in cyberspace. IRE plays a central role through the integration of a Digital *Fiqh* curriculum, the cultivation of social media ethics, the exemplary role of teachers as digital *uswah hasanah*, and collaboration in digital parenting. IRE serves as a vital instrument in shaping students' digital piety and transcendental awareness amid technological disruption.

Keywords: Connected World, Digital Ummah, Digital Literacy, Moral Integrity, Islamic Religious Education

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INTRODUCTION

The rapid acceleration of digital technology has ushered human civilization into what scholars conceptualize as a *connected world*—a global sociotechnical ecosystem in which social interaction transcends geographical, cultural, and temporal boundaries. Within this networked society, communication, identity construction, and knowledge exchange occur in real time through digitally mediated platforms (Castells, 2009). While this hyperconnectivity expands opportunities for collaboration and global engagement, it simultaneously produces a civilizational paradox: the stronger the technological interconnection, the more vulnerable the moral foundations that sustain it become.

This paradox is particularly evident in Muslim-majority societies such as Indonesia, where digital globalization intersects with religious identity formation. Internet penetration in Indonesia has surpassed 221 million users, dominated by adolescents and individuals of productive age (APJII, 2024). Such massive connectivity increases exposure not only to educational resources but also to cyber risks, including disinformation, cyberbullying, online gambling, and digital addiction. Globally, ethical vulnerabilities in digital ecosystems are reflected in the 3,205 data breach cases recorded in 2024, exposing nearly 12 billion personal records (Identity Theft Resource Center, 2024). These phenomena indicate that technological advancement is not always accompanied by proportional moral readiness.

In the educational sphere, the integration of artificial intelligence further complicates ethical dynamics. Reports indicate that more than 60% of educators have incorporated AI into learning processes, yet 58% of students admit to using AI dishonestly for academic tasks (International Center for Academic Integrity, 2024; World Economic Forum, 2025). This trend signals a crisis of intellectual integrity, where technology shifts from being a learning enhancer to a shortcut that undermines honesty and responsibility.

Within this sociotechnological transformation emerges the concept of the **Digital Ummah**, referring to the reconfiguration of Muslim communities into transnational cyber networks mediated by digital platforms (Bunt, 2009). Religious identity is no longer constructed solely through physical institutions such as mosques or pesantren, but also through online sermons, social media discourse, and algorithmically curated religious content. This transformation decentralizes religious authority, enabling the rise of digital preachers and influencers who may lack traditional scholarly credentials. While democratizing access to religious knowledge, this shift risks epistemological fragmentation and superficial religiosity.

Furthermore, the digitalization of religious life reflects processes of cultural hybridity and glocalization, where Islamic values intersect with global popular culture. The proliferation of halal lifestyle branding, Muslim fashion industries, and digital worship applications illustrates how faith practices are increasingly mediated by technological infrastructures. Consequently, contemporary Muslim youth inhabit dual religious spaces—physical and virtual—requiring new pedagogical responses from Islamic education.

From an Islamic educational perspective, this transformation expands the mandate of Islamic Religious Education (Pendidikan Agama Islam/PAI). Traditionally encompassing *tarbiyah* (nurturing), *ta'lim* (instruction), and *ta'dib* (character formation), PAI is now required

to address contextual digital realities alongside textual religious literacy (Rahman, 2025). Islamic education must function not merely as a transmitter of doctrinal knowledge but as a value-based system capable of guiding ethical behavior in cyberspace.

Moral integrity within Islamic epistemology is rooted in the integration of akhlaq and adab, grounded in the doctrine of tawhid. Behavioral accountability is internalized through the concept of *muraqabah*—the awareness of divine supervision over all human actions. Prophetic moral traits such as *siddiq* (truthfulness), *amanah* (trustworthiness), *tabligh* (responsibility), and *fathonah* (wisdom) form the ethical architecture of Muslim character. However, digital environments challenge these virtues through anonymity and psychological distancing.

The phenomenon known as the **Online Disinhibition Effect** explains how individuals behave more aggressively or dishonestly in cyberspace due to perceived invisibility and lack of social control (Suler, 2004). Students who demonstrate ethical conduct offline may engage in cyberbullying, plagiarism, or hate speech online. Simultaneously, algorithm-driven social media ecosystems amplify hedonism, materialism, and instant gratification cultures, reshaping youth value systems toward virality rather than virtue.

In addition, the digital information ecosystem produces conditions of informational overload and post-truth culture, where emotional narratives often override factual accuracy. The erosion of *tabayyun* (verification ethics) accelerates the spread of hoaxes and ideological polarization. Without critical digital literacy grounded in ethical and spiritual values, Muslim youth remain vulnerable to moral disorientation.

Given these multidimensional challenges, Islamic Religious Education occupies a strategic and irreplaceable role. It serves as a moral compass capable of integrating transcendental spirituality with contextual digital literacy. Through the internalization of *muraqabah* values, the development of digital fiqh, the cultivation of Islamic communication ethics, and the exemplarity of teachers as moral role models, PAI can function as a transformative instrument for strengthening students' moral integrity in the connected world.

Based on this background, this study addresses two central questions: (1) What factors contribute to the degradation of students' moral integrity in the era of digital globalization? and (2) How can Islamic Religious Education strategically respond to these challenges in order to reconstruct ethical character within the Digital Ummah?

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach using a library research design. Library research refers to a systematic series of activities involving the collection, reading, recording, and analysis of literature based data sources relevant to the research topic (Abdurrahman, 2024; Adlini et al., 2022). This approach was selected because the focus of the study lies in conceptual exploration and theoretical synthesis concerning moral integrity, digital society, and Islamic Religious Education within the context of contemporary technological transformation.

Rather than generating primary empirical data through field observation or surveys, this research critically examines secondary data derived from academic publications, scholarly books, institutional reports, and reputable statistical releases. Key sources include works in Islamic education, sociology of religion, digital ethics, and cyberpsychology, as well as reports issued by national and international institutions. Through this literature based exploration, the study

constructs an integrative understanding of the challenges faced by Muslim youth in digital environments and the strategic educational responses required.

The data collection process involved identifying relevant literature through thematic alignment with the core variables of the study, namely digital moral degradation, the transformation of the Muslim community in cyberspace, and the pedagogical role of Islamic Religious Education. Sources were selected based on their conceptual relevance, academic credibility, and contribution to the discourse on religion and digital society.

Data analysis was conducted using content analysis combined with descriptive interpretative analysis. Content analysis was employed to identify key themes, conceptual patterns, and recurring arguments within the literature. This analytical process enabled the classification of data into thematic categories such as online disinhibition, digital hedonism, information disorder, and ethical literacy in Islamic education.

The analytical procedure followed three stages. The first stage was data reduction, which involved selecting relevant information and excluding materials not aligned with the research focus. The second stage was data display, where findings were organized into systematic narrative structures to facilitate conceptual mapping. The third stage involved conclusion drawing and verification, conducted through cross source comparison to ensure interpretative consistency and analytical validity.

In addition, this study adopted a hermeneutic approach to interpret Islamic religious texts contextually. Qur'anic verses and Hadith related to morality, communication ethics, and human accountability were examined not only textually but also in relation to contemporary digital realities. This interpretative method allowed the integration of transcendental Islamic values with modern sociotechnical phenomena.

Through this multi layered analytical framework, the study synthesizes perspectives from sociological theorists, Islamic education scholars, and digital ethics researchers in order to construct a comprehensive conceptual model regarding the role of Islamic Religious Education in strengthening moral integrity within the Digital Ummah.

HASIL DAN PEMBAHASAN

Causes of Character Decline Amidst the Influence of Globalization and Digitalization

The urgency to understand the root causes of moral degradation in the digital age is undeniable. The phenomenon of declining character among the younger generation, marked by an increase in cases of cyber violence, AI-based academic cheating, online gambling, and a loss of manners in interactions, is not just a matter of ordinary juvenile delinquency, but a symptom of a more fundamental crisis of civilization. Based on data from the Indonesian Child Protection Commission (KPAI) and various sociological studies, there has been a significant shift in values due to intensive interaction with technology that is not balanced with spiritual maturity (Melawati, 2024). Without a proper diagnosis of the causes, educational efforts will be like treating the symptoms without addressing the root of the disease. The following is an in-depth analysis of the main factors causing this phenomenon.

1. The Effects of Online Disinhibition and the Loss of Social Control

One of the main psychological and sociological factors that trigger immoral behavior in cyberspace is what John Suler calls the Online Disinhibition Effect (Suler, 2004). In the digital space, the absence of physical face-to-face interaction and the existence of anonymity features

create the illusion that a person is “invisible” and “untouchable.” This condition breaks down the social and moral boundaries that normally restrain a person from behaving badly in the real world. A student who may be very polite and quiet in class can turn into an aggressive and cruel cyberbully on social media because they feel safe behind an anonymous account (fake account) or digital avatar. They feel detached from their true identity, so the moral standards they usually uphold become lax or even disappear altogether.

Sociologically, this phenomenon signifies a weakening of social control mechanisms. In traditional societies, norms are enforced through community surveillance—neighbors, teachers, and parents who directly observe children's behavior. However, in a connected world, this surveillance becomes blurred. Digital spaces often become private spaces isolated from the physical supervision of parents. Individuals feel detached from moral responsibility because interactions are impersonal and mediated by machines. A research shows that adolescents are often unaware of the legal and moral consequences of their digital footprints, viewing the internet as a “value-free zone” where traditional ethics do not apply (Soni, 2024) as seen in table 1.

Table 1. Illustration of Increased Vulnerability and Negative Behavior due to Lack of Supervision and Ethics in the Digital Space

Indicator	Data/Statistics	Source
Global Data Breaches (2024)	Global Data Breaches (2024) 12 billion records exposed (up 312% YoY) (Identity Theft Resource Center, 2024)	(Identity Theft Resource Center, 2024)
Academic Cheating with AI	Academic Cheating with AI 58% of students admits to using AI dishonestly (ICAL, 2024)	(ICAL, 2024)
School Bullying Cases (2023)	School Bullying Cases (2023) Increased from 21 cases (2022) to 30 cases (Kompas, 2023)	(Kompas, 2023)

The data above shows the correlation between unlimited access to technology and the loss of integrity. When human supervision is absent, and awareness of God's supervision (*muraqabah*) is weak, moral integrity will collapse instantly. Students use AI to cheat on school assignments not because they are incapable, but because the opportunity to be dishonest is wide open without fear of being caught immediately.

2. Digital Hedonism and Algorithmic Materialism

Globalization has brought with it a culture of materialism and hedonism, which is now exponentially reinforced by social media algorithms. Platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube are designed with algorithms that prioritize high engagement, which is often triggered by content that flaunts luxury (flexing), hedonistic lifestyles, and unrealistic beauty standards. The mechanisms of likes, views, and comments function as a dopamine reward system that creates an addiction to instant social validation (Imbo et al., 2025). This encourages teenagers to pursue worldly pleasures and false popularity over substantial values such as honesty, simplicity, and hard work.

Constant exposure to this luxurious lifestyle triggers heart diseases such as dissatisfaction, envy (*hasad*), and the desire to possess material goods by any means, including through instant

methods that violate religious and state laws. PPATK data from 2024 showing the high involvement of students in online gambling is clear evidence of the impact of this digital hedonism. Online gambling transactions among young people are not only an economic issue but also a reflection of the mentality of wanting to get rich quickly without effort (instant gratification), which contradicts the Islamic ethos (PPATK, 2024).

The student value system has become distorted; success is no longer defined as academic achievement, blessings, or good deeds, but rather as the accumulation of material possessions and virality on social media (Judijanto et al., 2025). Algorithms that systematically promote sensational content over educational content further exacerbate this condition, creating a toxic digital environment for character development. This digital hedonism shifts the focus of young people's lives from an otherworldly orientation to a purely worldly orientation that is shallow (Judijanto et al., 2025).

3. Information Overload, the Death of Critical Thinking, and the “Post-Truth” Culture

In the information age, the challenge is no longer a lack of access to knowledge, but rather an overload of unverified and often misleading information. The younger generation is inundated with a mixed flow of information consisting of facts, opinions, propaganda, hoaxes, and slander. The speed of information dissemination on social media often outweighs accuracy and truth (Judijanto et al., 2025). This phenomenon erodes the culture of *tabayyun* (clarification/verification), which is a fundamental principle in Islamic communication ethics. In facing this rapid flow of information, Islamic education has a strategic role in re-instilling the value of *tabayyun* as part of ethical digital literacy. The internalization of adab values and the integration of knowledge in Islamic education are key to shaping students' critical awareness of the truth of information in the digital space (Yunita et al., 2025). The adab-based Islamic education paradigm—namely, knowledge accompanied by ethics and wisdom—can serve as a moral filter in sorting valid information, while also strengthening the Islamic character of the younger generation in the digital age. Thus, Islamic value-based digital literacy is not only a technical skill, but also a spiritual and intellectual process in maintaining the integrity of information in the virtual world.

Teenagers, whose digital literacy skills may not yet be fully developed, tend to swallow whole information that aligns with their emotional biases or that is trending (viral), without checking the validity of the source. This leads to the easy spread of hate speech, slander, and digital defamation that can trigger social conflict (Imbo et al., 2025). In sociology, this condition is referred to as the post-truth era, where objective facts have less influence in shaping public opinion than emotional appeal and personal beliefs.

The inability to think critically and distinguish between true (*haq*) and false (*bathil*) information is a form of intellectual degradation that leads to moral degradation (Basit et al., 2025). When truth becomes relative and emotions are prioritized over facts, moral integrity becomes the main victim. Students become vulnerable to exposure to radicalism, intolerance, or, conversely, excessive liberalism, because social media algorithms tend to confine them to echo chambers that only amplify voices that align with their own group. Education that does not equip students with critical digital literacy skills contributes to this vulnerability. In this context, Islamic education needs to integrate critical digital literacy as part of a curriculum that emphasizes a balance between reason, morality, and faith. Islamic education has great potential in shaping digital

wellbeing and social media ethics among the young Muslim generation (Abror & Noviani, 2025). Through an approach that instills the value of *ta'dib* (civilized education), students are encouraged to not only understand technology as a tool, but also as a space of moral responsibility where every act of communication must be based on the principles of honesty, justice, and social responsibility. Thus, Islamic education serves as a spiritual and intellectual shield that protects the younger generation from the negative effects of social media algorithms that create polarization and disinformation.

In other words, the challenge of moral degradation in the digital age is the result of the convergence of three destructive forces: the psychology of anonymity that weakens self-control, an algorithmic culture that promotes hedonism and materialism, and a chaotic information ecosystem that kills critical thinking and ethical verification. These three factors intertwine to create a “perfect storm” that erodes the foundations of students' character, making them vulnerable to deviant behavior even though they live in a hyper-connected world.

Role of PAI in Shaping and Strengthening Student Character in Digital Age

Faced with the complexity of the moral challenges above, Islamic Religious Education (PAI) plays a very strategic and urgent role. IRE can no longer operate with a conventional passive model or merely transfer memorized arguments. It must revitalize its function as a moral compass that guides students in navigating the uncertain digital wilderness (Rahman, 2025). The urgency of PAI's role lies in its ability to touch the deepest spiritual dimensions of human beings—something that cannot be achieved by state legal regulations or technological filters alone. Based on a literature review, the following are the key roles of PAI in strengthening student character in the digital age. In the context of a digital age fraught with value disruption, Islamic Religious Education (PAI) is required to transform into an education that is not only normative but also transformative and adaptive to the dynamics of the times. The main challenge for Islamic education in the digital age is to maintain the relevance of Islamic values without losing their spiritual substance (Rahman, 2025). PAI needs to develop a collaborative, contextual, and technology-based pedagogical approach while remaining grounded in the principles of tauhid and adab. Through the strengthening of spiritual character, critical thinking skills, and ethical digital literacy, PAI can function as a moral immune system that protects students from the negative influences of the virtual world, while fostering awareness that technology is only a tool, not a determinant of truth and goodness.

1. *Internalization of Muraqabah Values as “Spiritual CCTV”*

The most fundamental role of PAI in the digital age is to instill the concept of Muraqabah, which is a deep and continuous spiritual awareness that Allah SWT is always watching over His servants' every move, including in private spaces and in the anonymous virtual world (Basit et al., 2025). Amidst the anonymity of the internet, where human supervision (by teachers/parents) is often absent, Muraqabah functions as the most effective and permanent “Spiritual CCTV” or inner control system. In relation to the concept of Muraqabah, Islamic education in the digital age needs to internalize this divine awareness through a reflective and contextual pedagogical approach. Religious practices in the digital age have undergone significant transformations,

where cyberspace has become a new spiritual arena that demands a form of self-monitoring based on awareness, not merely external rules (Basit et al., 2025). Through the strengthening of *Muraqabah*, students are encouraged to instill the value of *ihsan*—worshipping as if seeing Allah—as the foundation of digital media ethics. This kind of spiritual awareness serves a dual purpose: it strengthens individual moral responsibility while fostering a civilized and ethical digital culture within networked communities.

Through reflective and heartfelt (*qalb*) PAI learning, students are encouraged to understand that their digital footprints are recorded not only by the servers of giant technology companies, but also by the angels Raqib and Atid, and will be accounted for in the hereafter. The instillation of this strong belief makes moral integrity an inner need, not just external compliance with school rules. PAI teachers play a role in facilitating the process of *tazkiyatun nafs* (purification of the soul) so that students have a sense of shame (*haya'*) to commit immoral acts (such as accessing pornography, gambling, or spreading hoaxes) even when alone in front of their device screens. With *Muraqabah*, students will have a strong independent filter to reject negative content.

2. Integration of Digital Fiqh and Ethical Literacy (Adab)

PAI plays an important role in providing concrete and applicable legal (*fiqh*) and ethical (*adab*) guidance related to digital activities. The PAI curriculum needs to be expanded and contextualized to include contemporary discussions on “Digital Fiqh” or “Information Fiqh.” This material covers Islamic law related to electronic transactions (digital *muamalah*), social media ethics, copyright law and plagiarism, as well as the law on spreading false news or defaming others (Yunita et al., 2025). Students need to be taught that the principles of *maqasid syariah* (preserving religion, life, intellect, lineage, and property) also apply absolutely in the digital world. The idea of Digital Fiqh is in line with the new direction of Islamic education that emphasizes the integration of science, manners, and technology. The application of *maqasid syariah* in the digital context is an important step in reconstructing Islamic education that is adaptive to the times, without losing its spiritual and moral dimensions (Yunita et al., 2025). Learning based on the integration of knowledge and manners allows students to understand that every digital action—from sharing information to transactions—is part of moral responsibility and worship. Thus, Digital Fiqh does not merely regulate online behavior in a legalistic manner, but also shapes ethical and spiritual awareness that guides students to interact wisely, responsibly, and in accordance with Islamic values in cyberspace.

In addition to legal aspects, PAI instills the values of communication etiquette that are derived directly from the Qur'an. Principles such as *qaulan sadidan* (truthful/honest speech), *qaulan ma'rufan* (good/appropriate speech), *qaulan layyinan* (gentle speech), and strict prohibitions against *ghibah* (backbiting), *fitnah* (slander), and *namimah* (sowing discord) must be taught in the context of social media interactions (Basit et al., 2025). PAI learning contextualizes these verses (for example, Q.S. Al-Hujurat verse 6 about *tabayyun* with the current phenomenon of hoaxes, teaching students to be disciplined in verifying information before sharing it (sharing before filtering). Thus, PAI forms value-based digital literacy, where technical competence in

using technology is combined with religious ethical maturity. These *adab al-qaul* values are an important foundation in building Islamic communication ethics in the digital age. Islamic Religious Education that incorporates the dimension of Qur'anic communication ethics can increase students' moral awareness in using social media responsibly (Imbo et al., 2025).

They emphasize that the internalization of the concepts of *qaulan sadidan* and *tabayyun* through formal education contributes significantly to self-control in interacting in digital spaces that are often value-free. By combining the teachings of the Qur'an and digital literacy awareness, Islamic Religious Education not only educates intelligent technology users but also shapes a generation that is polite, honest, and has integrity in online communication.

3. Teachers as Murabbi and Uswah Hasanah in Digital Space

In an era where role models are increasingly rare and replaced by influencers who often display a hedonistic lifestyle, PAI teachers have a central role as *uswah hasanah* (good role models) both in the real world and the virtual world. The role of teachers is not limited to classroom hours, but extends to being role models in the digital public sphere. PAI teachers must be able to demonstrate positive, polite, wise, and inspiring digital behavior on their own social media, setting a real example of how a Muslim interacts in a connected world (Imbo et al., 2025). In this context, global collaboration in Islamic education requires teachers who not only act as educators but also as digital role models who display Islamic morals in every online interaction. When PAI teachers actively display exemplary behavior through positive actions on social media—such as sharing educational content, engaging in polite dialogue, and avoiding hate speech—students are more likely to imitate and internalize these values (Judijanto et al., 2025). Thus, the digital exemplary behavior of teachers is not merely a symbol of personal morality, but also an effective pedagogical instrument in instilling the value of *uswah hasanah* in the era of network society.

As *murabbi* (spiritual educators), PAI teachers must build emotional closeness with students, becoming a place for them to ask questions (*marja'*) and discuss the moral dilemmas they face in the digital world. Teachers need to have sufficient digital literacy to be able to tune into the students' communication frequency, understand the trends they follow, but still bring prophetic values to correct any deviations. Through this exemplary behavior and personal guidance, PAI teachers can counterbalance the negative influence of the toxic content that students consume on a daily basis (Melawati, 2024). Teachers become a bridge that connects sacred religious texts with the context of students' modern lives, making religion feel relevant and a solution to their problems. The personal and empathetic approach of PAI teachers as *murabbi* is very important in building the spiritual and emotional balance of students amid exposure to complex digital culture. Emotional closeness between educators and students is the main foundation in creating a safe, supportive, and meaningful learning environment (Melawati, 2024). In the context of Islamic education, this relationship enables teachers to not only be conveyors of knowledge, but also moral and psychological guides who understand the digital social dynamics faced by students. Thus, teachers' digital literacy combined with empathy and prophetic values makes Islamic Education a space for holistic character building—sharpening the mind, touching the heart, and guiding behavior in facing the moral challenges of the virtual world.

1. Digital Parenting Collaboration and Strengthening Three Pillars of Education

PAI in schools cannot run on its own. The role of PAI also includes educating parents about the importance of Digital Parenting based on Islamic values. PAI can be the initiator of collaboration between schools, families, and communities to create a healthy digital ecosystem for children (Handrianto et al., 2023). This strategy includes socializing parents on how to accompany their children in the virtual world, implementing mutually agreed rules on gadget use (family media agreement), and strengthening family communication. Collaboration between schools, families, and communities in building a healthy digital ecosystem is highly relevant to the concept of the Three Pillars of Education, which has been revived in the context of modern Islamic Religious Education (Handrianto et al., 2023). Synergy between teachers, parents, and the social environment is the key to successful character education in the digital age. Through a participatory approach, parents not only supervise their children's use of technology but also set an example in applying Islamic values-based digital ethics at home. PAI acts as a facilitator that connects the principles of *tarbiyah* (guidance) at school with the practice of digital parenting in the family, thereby creating continuity between formal and informal education in instilling civilized digital literacy.

This Islamic values-based approach to digital parenting is in line with ideas that highlight the importance of Islamic education in building the digital wellbeing of the younger generation of Muslims (Abror & Noviani, 2025). Active parental involvement in digital mentoring, when accompanied by an understanding of spiritual values, can create a balance between children's freedom of exploration and family moral control. Parents do not only act as supervisors, but also as *murabbi* in the digital realm—becoming role models in using technology ethically and productively.

Thus, Digital Parenting in Islam is not a restriction, but a *tarbiyah* process that fosters spiritual awareness and social responsibility in the use of technology. The concept of Digital Parenting in Islam emphasizes balance (*tawazun*) and compassion, not just rigid prohibitions. Parents are encouraged to become technologically literate facilitators while still maintaining moral control. The synergy between the moral messages taught by PAI teachers at school and parental guidance at home will create consistency in strong character education. Islamic Education also encourages the use of technology for good, such as the use of Al-Qur'an applications, positive da'wah content, and credible religious learning platforms, so that gadgets change their function from mere entertainment tools to means of *tarbiyah* (Abror & Noviani, 2025).

In summary, the role of PAI in facing the challenges of the digital age is transformative and multidimensional. PAI not only builds internal defenses through the cultivation of faith and *muraqabah*, but also equips students with intellectual tools in the form of *fiqh* and digital ethics to interact wisely. Supported by the example set by adaptive teachers and parental collaboration, PAI becomes a vital instrument for producing “Digital Muslims” with integrity—individuals who are able to utilize technological sophistication for the benefit of the community without compromising their morality.

CONCLUSION

Based on the comprehensive analysis and discussion presented above, several key conclusions can be drawn. First, the degradation of character values and moral integrity among the younger generation of the “Digital Ummah” today is caused by the convergence of three interrelated destructive factors: (1) The online disinhibition effect, which undermines social control and shame due to anonymity; (2) The hegemony of hedonism and materialism, which is systematically amplified by social media algorithms that trigger ostentatious behavior and an addiction to instant validation; and (3) A crisis of critical reasoning and the death of a culture of *tabayyun* (verification) due to information overload, which encourages the spread of hoaxes and hatred. These three factors create a very fragile ecosystem for moral growth if not intervened appropriately.

Second, Islamic Religious Education (PAI) plays a strategic, central, and irreplaceable role in responding to this civilizational crisis. PAI serves as a spiritual foundation through the instillation of *Muraqabah* (awareness of God's supervision) values, which become an internal control system for students when human supervision is absent. Additionally, PAI provides practical and legal guidance through the integration of the Digital *Fiqh* curriculum and Islamic communication ethics (*adab*) to equip students with moral digital literacy competencies. The role of PAI teachers as adaptive *uswah hasanah* (role models) in the digital space, as well as initiators of digital parenting together with parents, is key to successfully transforming technological challenges into opportunities for character building.

The importance of this topic for future education lies in the urgency to redefine character education strategies so that they remain relevant to the digital zeitgeist (spirit of the times). Without the integration of transcendental spiritual values with contextual digital literacy, education will fail to produce well-rounded individuals (*insan-kamil*). Furthermore, for future research, it is recommended that there be more in-depth empirical studies (field studies/experiments) on the effectiveness of digital project-based PAI curriculum models (e.g., creative da'wah content creation) in measurably improving students' ethical behavior. In addition, research on the collaborative role of schools, parents, and online communities in creating a conducive “cyber-Islamic environment” is also needed to complement this discourse. For education practitioners, it is recommended to immediately adopt Islamic value-based digital literacy modules into both extracurricular and extracurricular activities.

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