

THE PROFESSIONALISM OF ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS EDUCATION TEACHERS IN FACING THE CHALLENGES OF DIGITALIZED LEARNING (CASE STUDY AT TAHFIZHUL QURAN AL KAUTSAR SCHOOL, KLATEN)

Ibrahim Gitarius ^{a*)}, Agus Sulistyono ^{a)}

^{a)} *Madani College of Islamic Education (STIT Madani), Yogyakarta, Indonesia*

^{*)}*e-mail korespondensi: ibrahim22@stitmadani.ac.id*

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Abstract. The transformation of digital education presents both challenges and opportunities for Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers, particularly in shaping students' character. This study aims to examine the impact of learning digitalization on the role of PAI teachers, the challenges they face in mastering technology, and the strategies for developing digital-based learning at Tahfizhul Quran Al Kautsar School in Klaten. This research employs a qualitative case study approach through interviews, observations, and documentation conducted in June 2025. The findings indicate that digitalization has shifted the role of teachers to become more active facilitators. However, challenges such as low digital literacy and limited infrastructure remain significant obstacles. Solutions include training, the development of Islamic digital teaching materials, the use of appropriate platforms, and communication with students' guardians. Collaboration among teachers, schools, and relevant stakeholders is essential to create innovative yet value-driven Islamic education.

I. INTRODUCTION

Education in the digital era demands the integration of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) into every subject (Bowen & Lack, 2015). This transformation offers opportunities for students to access information more broadly, quickly, and easily (Pare & Sihotang, 2023). To meet the challenges of the 21st century, both teachers and students are required to possess effective communication skills and adaptability to the dynamics of technological advancement. According to Rivaldy et al. (2023), the progress of time brings increasingly complex problems that demand higher-order thinking skills to solve. Challenges such as globalization, economic growth, global competition, environmental issues, and cultural and political dynamics emphasize the importance of developing the skills and insights necessary to compete and succeed in the modern era (Amalia Yunia Rahmawati, 2020).

Islamic education, as an integral part of the global education system, is now amidst a rapid flow of digital technological development (Nudin, 2020). This progress brings both challenges and new opportunities for the learning process in Islamic educational institutions. In the current era of globalization and digitalization, the use of technology has become an urgent necessity to improve the quality of education and to prepare a Muslim generation capable of competing in the modern world (Jihan et al., 2023). The aim of Islamic education itself is to form individuals who are faithful, knowledgeable, and have noble character in accordance with Islamic values (Hidayat et al., 2018). This process includes the internalization of Islamic values, understanding of the Qur'an and Hadith, and the application of Islamic teachings in everyday life.

The focus of Islamic education is not only limited to intellectual aspects, but also on the development of character, spirituality, and morality, to produce a complete human being (*insan kamil*) who can contribute positively to society (Kamil, n.d.). Various technological innovations such as online learning, e-learning, augmented reality (AR), and virtual reality (VR) offer great potential to make learning more engaging, flexible, and inclusive. However, implementation still faces several challenges, such as infrastructure limitations, unequal access, and the need to ensure that Islamic values remain fully integrated in the use of technology (Khasanah, 2024).

Improving the professionalism of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers in the digital era requires a curriculum that integrates religious values with technology, so that students not only understand Islamic teachings but can also apply them in modern life. Collaboration among teachers, educational institutions, and the government is crucial through training, seminars, and workshops that support the mastery of educational technology. Challenges such as limited access to valid learning resources and the complexity of moral issues require teachers to act as holistic facilitators who guide students. The use of digital platforms enables flexible and innovative learning, requiring teachers to be open to change and continuously develop themselves through lifelong learning and collaboration within the educational community to strengthen shared competence (Fauziah, 2024).

According to Lestari et al. (2025), the digital divide in education has the potential to widen social and economic disparities, as students with limited access to technology tend to fall behind in academic achievement and future skills. Therefore, addressing this inequality is crucial to ensure that all students have equal opportunities for success. In modern and future education, the issue of the digital divide is increasingly important. This term encompasses differences in access to, understanding of, and utilization of ICT among various community groups. According to McKinsey, the digital divide refers to disparities in the use of digital technology to maximize potential in education, health, and the economy. This includes the availability of devices, adequate internet connectivity, digital skills, and equitable application of technology in the learning process (San Mikael Sinambela et al., 2024).

The development of information and communication technology (ICT) has drastically transformed the educational landscape (Chastanti et al., 2017). Learning is no longer confined to conventional classrooms but can be accessed anytime and anywhere through various digital platforms (Sufiana et al., 2025). This phenomenon, known as digitalized learning, has significant implications for the role of teachers, including PAI teachers at Tahfizhul Quran Al Kautsar School in Klaten. PAI teachers play a crucial role in shaping students' character and morals based on Islamic values. However, the challenges of digitalization require PAI teachers at Tahfizhul Quran Al Kautsar School to not only master religious material but also possess strong digital competencies.

Tahfizhul Quran Al Kautsar School seeks to improve its readiness to face these challenges effectively. This provides a strong foundation to further explore the importance of PAI teachers in addressing the challenges of digitalized learning. Based on this background, the research focuses on three main questions: (1) How does the digitalization of learning affect the roles and functions of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers at Tahfizhul Quran Al Kautsar School in Klaten? (2) What challenges do PAI teachers at the school face in mastering digital competencies to support technology-based learning? (3) What strategies can PAI teachers implement to face and optimize digital learning in shaping students' character and morals? This study is expected to contribute to the professionalism of PAI teachers in facing digitalized learning in a more innovative and applicable way in today's digital era.

II. RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a qualitative approach using a case study method to examine the role of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers in addressing the digitalization of learning at Tahfizhul Quran Al Kautsar School in Klaten. PAI teachers are the primary subjects, as they play a crucial role in utilizing digital learning to deliver instructional materials to students. Meanwhile, students are observed as the objects of the study to assess the extent to which digital learning has been implemented by the teachers.

Data collection was conducted from June 1 to June 20, 2025, using three main techniques: in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation. Interviews were carried out with PAI teachers to understand the professional digital practices they employed, while observations focused on students within the context of learning and social interaction. Documentation—such as digital learning facilities including laptops, projectors, and classrooms—was used to strengthen field data. All data were analyzed qualitatively using descriptive methods through stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. To ensure validity, the researchers applied triangulation of sources, techniques, and timing, so that the results obtained would be accurate and accountable. Thus, this method was chosen to ensure that the findings align with the research objectives and can provide a comprehensive contextual picture of the role of Islamic Religious Education in shaping students' moral development.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. The Impact of Digitalization on the Role and Function of PAI Teachers

Study findings show that digitalization has significantly transformed the role of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers—from merely being knowledge transmitters to becoming facilitators, mentors, and motivators (Khasanah, 2024). Teachers are now required to master not only religious content but also digital platforms such as e-learning systems, social media, or educational applications (Zuhro & Sutomo, 2022). At Tahfizhul Quran Al Kautsar School in Klaten, digitalization is applied under specific conditions, such as using projectors to strengthen students' visual and auditory understanding. This integration expands learning beyond the constraints of time and space, while teachers continue to ensure that Islamic values remain at the core of digital teaching.

According to Saputra (2019), the use of the TPACK and TAM models to assess teachers' readiness found that although platforms such as Google Classroom or Moodle have been utilized, many teachers are still unable to optimize technology to create interactive content aligned with Islamic values.

2. Challenges in Mastering Digital Competence for PAI Teachers

The study identified several major challenges :

- 1) Low digital literacy among teachers
Many teachers are still unfamiliar with educational software or mobile learning applications. Training opportunities remain limited (Holivil et al., 2025).
- 2) Infrastructure limitations
Access to devices (laptops, projectors, smartphones) and internet connectivity remains inadequate, especially in tahfiz-based schools in regions like Klaten (Bintang et al., 2024).
- 3) Developing meaningful digital materials

Creating multimedia-based, interactive learning content that deeply incorporates Islamic values is a significant challenge for many teachers (Curup, 2024).

4) Maintaining student interaction and motivation

A key challenge is keeping students engaged when learning is conducted digitally without direct face-to-face interaction (Bahrudin et al., 2024).

5) Workload management

The combination of creating digital content, maintaining digital platforms, and conducting assessments adds to teachers' workload and can be overwhelming if not managed properly (Serrano Cardona & Muñoz Mata, 2013).

3. Strategies for Optimizing Digital Learning by PAI Teachers

1) Intensive digital training

Involving teachers in workshops or courses related to e-learning, digital content creation, and TPACK to improve their technical and pedagogical competence (Sanusi et al., 2023).

2) Developing creative and value-based digital materials

Designing multimedia content (videos, animations, interactive modules) that integrates Islamic values to make learning more relevant and engaging for students (Al Hafila Hafiz, Juliani, Demak Sariyani Br Sihotang, Putri Ameylia, 2024).

3) Selecting appropriate digital platforms

Using platforms such as Google Classroom, Edmodo, Zoom, or tahfiz-specific apps to support two-way interaction and continuous monitoring (P2, 2024).

4) Diversifying learning methods

Combining blended learning, online discussions, interactive quizzes, project-based assignments, and educational social media to maintain student motivation and engagement (Suartama, 2025).

5) Building effective communication with students' guardians

Establishing open communication with parents to monitor students' development and ensure that moral values are internalized at home and school (Bambang Triyono & Elis Mediawati, 2023).

6) Time and workload balance management

Teachers need to manage digital learning schedules, content creation, and assessments efficiently to avoid stress or burnout (Zahara et al., 2024).

IV. CONCLUSION

This study affirms that digitalization has had a significant impact on the role and function of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers in the modern era. Teachers are not only required to deliver Islamic teachings but also to wisely utilize technology to convey religious values in a format that aligns with the needs and characteristics of today's students. Although the implementation of digitalization at Tahfizhul Quran Al Kautsar School in Klaten has not yet been fully optimized, innovative efforts have begun to emerge. The main challenges faced include low digital literacy among teachers, limited infrastructure, and difficulties in creating digital materials that still retain an Islamic character. Therefore, sustainable strategies are needed, involving training in educational technology, the development of creative content that integrates Islamic values, the selection of appropriate platforms, and support from both the school and government. With structural support and the enhancement of teacher competencies, digitalized learning should not be seen as a threat, but rather as an opportunity to make religious education more contextual, flexible, and far-reaching. Ideally, PAI teachers will not remain passive participants in the wave of digitalization, but instead become agents of educational transformation who shape a Muslim generation that is spiritually strong and technologically adaptive. The researcher would like to express sincere gratitude to all parties who have supported the completion of this study. Special thanks are extended to the leadership and teachers of Tahfizhul Quran Al Kautsar School in Klaten for their cooperation and valuable insights, which greatly contributed to the research process. Appreciation is also given to academic advisors, family, and peers for their encouragement and guidance, which were highly meaningful in the successful completion of this research.

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