

The role of Islamic education teachers in developing innovative learning in the digital era: a literature review

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Abstract: *This study aims to analyze the strategic role of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers as digital innovators in the era of disruption. Unlike previous studies that have largely focused on the technical aspects of digital learning, this research addresses the theoretical gap regarding the integration of technological competence with the preservation of Islamic values. Using a qualitative literature study method with thematic content analysis of recent literatures including academic journals, policy documents, and relevant books this research introduces the concept of Value-Added TPACK. This is an integrative framework that synergizes technology, pedagogy, and the internalization of akhlaq (Islamic ethics). The results indicate that PAI teachers must transform into ethical gatekeepers who effectively filter global digital information through the perspective of Islamic values. Innovative learning models, such as blended learning and gamification, are identified not merely as technical tools, but as wasilah (means) to achieve falah (spiritual success) by fostering Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) and Higher Order Spiritual Skills. This study concludes that the "Islamization of technology" approach is crucial to ensure that digital transformation remains aligned with the core objectives of Islamic education and maintains the moral authority of educators amidst information disruption.*

Keywords: PAI teachers; digital innovation; ethical gatekeeper; Value-Added TPACK; Islamic values

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Introduction

Current developments in information technology compel the education sector to adapt; however, the transition toward digital learning in Islamic Religious Education (*Pendidikan Agama Islam* or PAI) is often trapped in mere administrative digitization without addressing pedagogical essence. The primary challenge for PAI today is urgent: teachers are not only required to master technology but must also act as *ethical gatekeepers* who protect the integrity of students' character and spirituality from the flow of digital information that may contradict Islamic values.

The advancement of information and communication technology has brought fundamental changes to the world of education. This digital transformation requires teachers to provide learning that adapts to technological progress, making it more flexible, interactive, and student-centered (Lathifah, 2024). The necessity of technology-integrated learning is essential for students in light of technological progress, coupled with the characteristics of students who are rapid in accessing information and tend to prefer visual and collaborative learning. This condition requires educators to be capable of designing innovative learning so that the process remains relevant, effective, and meaningful. In the context of Islamic Education, the main challenge is urgent: learning must not only be oriented toward cognitive aspects but also toward the formation of character, *akhlaq* (morals), and student spirituality amidst the flow of digital information that does not always align with Islamic values (Fauzi & Handayani, 2025).

Numerous studies have shown that utilizing technology in learning can increase student interest, motivation, engagement, and the effectiveness of the learning process (Santoso, 2025). Other studies

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affirm that technology-based learning models such as *blended learning*, *e-learning*, and the use of interactive multimedia are capable of supporting more active and contextual learning. Conversely, other research on integration has revealed obstacles in the learning process, including teachers limited digital literacy, a lack of professional training, and limitations in facilities and institutional support (Rahman & Hakim, 2024).

Although literature exists that reviews the effectiveness of technology on learning motivation, most of this research focuses only on general education or the technical aspects of media use. The absence of an integrative model often leads PAI teachers to experience pedagogical disorientation: on one hand, they are expected to be digitally innovative, yet on the other, they lack operational guidelines to filter digital content to ensure it aligns with Islamic values. Previous research on technology integration in PAI tends to be partial, limited to the use of specific media or learning models, and thus has not provided a comprehensive overview of the PAI teacher's position as an agent of innovation and a guardian of Islamic values.

Several studies in the field of Islamic Education have highlighted the importance of learning innovation and technology integration to improve learning quality. However, literature that explicitly conceptualizes the strategic role of PAI teachers as digital innovators synergizing pedagogical competence with the comprehensive internalization of Islamic values remains very limited, thereby triggering an urgency for a more holistic model (Hidayat & Nursikin, 2025). Previous studies remain partial and limited, failing to provide a comprehensive depiction of the PAI teacher's role as both an innovator and a guardian of Islamic values (Zulkifli et al., 2024).

To address this gap, this research synthesizes various literature to build a comprehensive conceptual framework regarding the role of Islamic Education teachers as learning innovators. The *novelty* of this article lies in the integration of the TPACK competence model with a framework of digital *akhlak* values, which provides an operational foundation for teachers to perform the "Islamization of technology" in learning design. "Islamization of technology" here is interpreted not as a rejection of digital devices, but as a conscious effort to curate and adapt the functions of technology so that they become a means for shaping students' character (*akhlak*). This study positions pedagogical and value dimensions as integral parts of developing innovative learning.

Based on this background, the research questions in this study are: (1) how is the concept of innovative learning conceptualized in the context of the digital era; (2) what is the role of Islamic Education teachers in developing innovative learning; (3) what are the forms of digital-based Islamic Education learning innovation; and (4) what challenges do Islamic Education teachers face in its implementation?

The objectives of this article are: (1) to describe the concept of innovative learning in the digital era; (2) to analyze the strategic role of PAI teachers as innovators; (3) to identify forms of digital-based learning innovation; and (4) to formulate strategies for overcoming the challenges of value-based digital education.

Method

This study employs a qualitative design using a library research method to construct a new conceptual framework regarding the role of PAI (Islamic Religious Education) teachers in innovative learning. This approach was selected as it facilitates in-depth analysis and systematic theoretical synthesis of existing literature (Zed, 2014; Snyder, 2019).

The research subjects consist of contemporary scholarly literature, including academic books, reputable national and international journal articles, conference proceedings, and educational policy documents concerning Islamic education, learning innovation, teacher competence, and the utilization of technology in education. The selection of literature was conducted based on inclusion criteria: (1) thematic relevance to PAI learning innovation and digital technology; (2) publication within the last ten

years (2014–2024); (3) origin from reputable databases (Google Scholar, DOAJ, Scopus/Sinta); and (4) inclusion of classic references that possess strong theoretical authority in Islamic education.

The primary instrument in this study is the researcher (*human instrument*), supported by a *data extraction sheet*. This tool was utilized to map source identities, research focuses, and synthesize findings in an organized manner. The literature selection procedure was conducted through four systematic stages: (1) Searching using specific keywords in the Google Scholar and Sinta databases with a publication range of 2014–2024; (2) Screening titles and abstracts to ensure relevance to PAI (Islamic Religious Education) innovation; (3) Classifying articles focused on the teacher's role and value integration in technology; and (4) Documenting the data extraction results. Based on this selection procedure, 22 journal articles and policy documents were identified as meeting the inclusion criteria and were deemed the most relevant for in-depth analysis in this study.

Data analysis was performed using *content analysis* techniques, which include the stages of *open coding*, thematic categorization based on the TPACK framework and Islamic values, and drawing conclusions through intertextual synthesis (Krippendorff, 2018). Data validity was ensured through source triangulation, comparing the consistency of findings across various literature to minimize interpretation bias.

Results and Discussion

The synthesis of literature indicates that innovative learning in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) is not merely pragmatic technology adoption, but a re-conceptualization of the teacher's role as an *ethical gatekeeper* in cyberspace. The following discussion analyzes how technology integration can be realized without degrading the essence of spirituality through the *Value-Added TPACK* framework. Data shows a shift from *teacher-centered* to *student-centered* learning, requiring students to act as active constructors of knowledge. This aligns with Lathifah (2024), who emphasizes that technological flexibility enables personalized learning. The findings are presented in sub-sections covering the concept of innovative learning, the strategic role of PAI teachers, forms of digital-based learning innovation, and the challenges and opportunities encountered. This discussion links these findings with established theories and previous studies to strengthen the analysis.

However, critical analysis demonstrates that in the context of Islamic Education, this shift must not fall into "digital-centrism." While general education may focus solely on digital literacy, PAI must place *akhlak* (moral character) at the center of all digital activities. Consequently, critical thinking and collaboration skills emerging in the digital era must be filtered through Islamic values, ensuring that innovative learning encompasses not only the mastery of Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) but also "Higher Order Spiritual Skills."

1. The Concept of Innovative Learning in the Digital Era

This study synthesizes 22 key pieces of literature identified through a systematic selection procedure (see Table 1). These sources encompass various perspectives, ranging from the TPACK framework and technological effectiveness to digital ethics within the context of Islamic education.

Table 1. Synthesis of Literature Regarding PAI Learning Innovation in the Digital Era

Literature Category	Key References (Examples)	Focus of Findings
Theoretical Framework	Koehler & Mishra (2009); Zulkifli et al. (2024)	The shifting role of the teacher as an <i>ethical gatekeeper</i> .
Digital Pedagogy	Lathifah (2024); Schindler et al. (2017)	The effectiveness of <i>student-centered learning</i> and TPACK.
Media Innovation	Pratama & Syarifuddin (2024); Ramadhan & Fitriani (2025)	The utilization of VR and Gamification as <i>wasilah</i> (means).
Challenges & Ethics	Fatimah & Huda (2024); Fauzi & Handayani (2025)	The importance of digital citizenship literacy & ethics.

The results of this study indicate that innovative learning in the digital era marks a fundamental shift from a *teacher-centered* paradigm toward a *student-centered* one. This phenomenon aligns with the findings of Lathifah (2024), who emphasizes that technological flexibility provides space for personalized learning. As noted in Table 1 (see the challenges category), the literature confirms that the primary obstacle is no longer device availability, but rather the 'ontological gap' between the speed of technological advancement and the readiness of teachers' values (Fauzi & Handayani, 2025; Zulkifli et al., 2024)

The study shows that innovative learning in the digital era marks a fundamental shift from *teacher-centered* to *student-centered* paradigms. This phenomenon aligns with Lathifah (2024), who highlights that technological flexibility provides space for personalized learning. However, critical analysis of the literature reveals that this shift is not merely a change in instructional medium, but a transformation of the student's role from a passive object to an active knowledge constructor. Learning focus has shifted from mere knowledge transfer toward the development of 21st-century competencies critical thinking, creativity, and collaboration as emphasized by Schindler et al. (2017) in their meta-analysis on educational technology effectiveness. In the context of PAI, this orientation demands a new synthesis: students' collaboration and digital literacy skills must be aligned with the internalization of *akhlak*, ensuring that digital innovation does not reduce spiritual depth to mere technical-cognitive outcomes.

These findings reaffirm the relevance of 21st-century learning theories that integrate technology with the development of Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS). Theoretically, this paradigm shift is rooted in Vygotsky's social constructivism, yet in a digital context, it undergoes a crucial reconceptualization. Knowledge is no longer viewed as a static commodity but as the result of active construction by students through social interaction on digital platforms (Lathifah, 2024). However, the interpretation of this phenomenon suggests that the use of collaborative platforms does not merely facilitate the *Zone of Proximal Development* (ZPD) virtually; it also demands the PAI teacher's role as a "curator of meaning." If conventional ZPD relies on face-to-face interaction, virtual ZPD in the digital era carries the risk of value fragmentation. Therefore, digital collaboration in PAI must not stop at the cognitive aspect but must be managed as a dialectical space where students examine their understanding of Islamic values. Thus, technology functions as a catalyst for knowledge construction that simultaneously strengthens the ethical basis of students' interaction in cyberspace.

Success in technology integration in PAI is not supported solely by device availability but depends heavily on the teacher's *Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge* (TPACK) competence. Silvester et al. (2024) confirm that TPACK is a primary determinant of digital learning effectiveness. This theory emphasizes that innovative teachers must have synergy between technological, pedagogical, and content knowledge simultaneously (Silvester, Sumarni, & Saputro, 2024). In the context of Islamic Education, innovative learning is not only oriented toward process effectiveness but must be grounded in the values of *tauhid*, *akhlak*, and ethics. A harmonious integration between TPACK and Islamic values ensures that digital transformation preserves the dignity of education as a means of balanced character formation (Aswandi & Quddus, 2025).

In this study's perspective, the TPACK framework must be expanded with a "Value" dimension (*Value-Added TPACK*). Innovative PAI teachers are those who can integrate technology (*Technological*) with appropriate teaching methods (*Pedagogical*) and the depth of religious material (*Content*) infused with Islamic ethics. This interpretation refutes the assumption that technology is neutral; for PAI teachers, technology is a *wasilah* (means) that must be "Islamized" in its function so as not to degrade the spiritual values that remain the primary focus of PAI. Unlike the application of TPACK in general education, which is oriented toward technical efficiency, its application in PAI faces the challenge of 'technological neutrality.' This finding indicates that PAI teachers cannot position technology as a neutral tool. Therefore, the *Value-Added TPACK* concept proposed in this research

becomes crucial as a value filter, where the 'Content' dimension refers not only to religious material but to the curation of digital content aligned with *akhlaq*.

This integration is supported by empirical findings indicating that TPACK competence must be accompanied by value curation (see Table 1, digital pedagogy category), ensuring that technology truly functions as a means for character development (Silvester et al., 2024; Iskandar & Wulandari, 2025).

2. The Strategic Role of Islamic Education Teachers as Innovators

Based on the 22 identified literatures, the following is a synthesis regarding the Strategic Role of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) Teachers as Innovators (Table 2).

Table 2. Synthesis of the Strategic Role of PAI Teachers as Innovators

Role Dimension	Key Literature Findings	Relevance to Value-Added TPACK
Meaning Curator	Transforming data into <i>hikmah</i> (wisdom) (Fatimah & Huda, 2024).	Strengthening the <i>Content</i> dimension (Islamic Ethics).
Pedagogical Innovator	Integration of <i>student-centered</i> learning & TPACK (Silvester et al., 2024).	Synergy between the <i>Technological</i> & <i>Pedagogical</i> dimensions.
Ethical Guardian	<i>Ethical Gatekeeper</i> in cyberspace (Zulkifli et al., 2024).	Value filtering within technology.
Community Mobilizer	Collaboration in <i>Communities of Practice</i> (Trust et al., 2016).	Continuous capacity building.

The PAI teacher's role as an innovator often clashes with administrative burdens and the demands of technological adaptation. Literature findings affirm that PAI teacher innovation is not measured by the sophistication of the applications used, but by their ability to perform "curation of meaning." In the boundless flow of digital information, PAI teachers act as filters that transform data into *hikmah* (wisdom). This distinguishes PAI innovators from general education innovators: their innovation orientation is not merely toward cognitive output, but toward *falah* (spiritual well-being).

The literature asserts that amidst the deluge of unfiltered global information, PAI teachers act as a crucial filter. Findings from Fatimah & Huda (2024) and Zulkifli et al. (2024) indicate that innovation is not merely about the sophistication of applications, but rather the ability to curate meaning so that digital content remains aligned with Islamic *aqidah* (creed) and *akhlaq* (morality). Teachers are transforming from mere content distributors into curators who ensure that digitalization does not degrade spiritual depth (Fauzi & Handayani, 2025; Pranowo & Abdullah, 2024).

Literature analysis shows that Islamic Education teachers have an increasingly complex role in the digital era. Teachers no longer function merely as conveyers of material (*mu'allim*), but also as learning facilitators, instructional designers, motivators, and moral guides (*murabbi* and *murshid*). Teachers are responsible for designing engaging learning experiences, utilizing technology pedagogically, and ensuring the learning process continues to internalize Islamic values.

More deeply, the teacher's role as an innovator in the digital era now includes the responsibility of being a content curator and an *ethical gatekeeper*. Islamic Education teachers are required to possess a comprehensive Digital Literacy framework, covering cognitive, constructive, and communicative dimensions. As innovators, teachers not only select learning applications but are also able to filter global information flows to remain consistent with Islamic *aqidah* (faith). This positions teachers as a bridge between classical texts (*turath*) and digital reality, enabling students to understand religion contextually while remaining anchored in authoritative sources (Hidayat & Nursikin, 2025).

Hidayat & Nursikin (2025) emphasize that the role of PAI teachers in the digital era encompasses responsibilities as *murabbi* (spiritual educators) and *murshid* (value mentors). This role demands that teachers not only be technically proficient but also capable of integrating the values of *amanah* (trustworthiness) and *tabligh* (conveying truth) into virtual interactions. Consequently, the digital

classroom ecosystem created is not merely a space for knowledge transfer, but a dialectical space that promotes politeness and social responsibility (Zulkifli et al., 2024).

The transformation of the teacher's role as a digital *murabbi* is also closely related to strengthening the *Cyber-Ethics (Akhlak Digital)* aspect. From the perspective of *Technology Readiness Theory*, innovator teachers are those who are not only technically proficient but are also able to integrate the values of *amanah* (trustworthiness) and *tabligh* (conveying) into virtual interactions. Teachers must be able to design a digital classroom ecosystem that promotes polite communication and social responsibility. Thus, innovation by Islamic Education teachers is not just the digitization of material, but a process of the "Islamization of technology," where digital devices are used as a means to achieve *falah* (well-being in this world and the hereafter) (Zulkifli, Ramly, & Fattah, 2024).

"The innovative role of PAI teachers is highly dependent on a modified version of Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) competence (Silvester et al., 2024; Iskandar & Wulandari, 2025). The literature indicates that innovative teachers are those capable of synergizing technical (technological) and pedagogical skills with the depth of Islamic content. This integration, according to Aswandi & Quddus (2025), transforms technology into a *wasilah* (means) capable of strengthening the character foundation, rather than merely acting as a neutral technical instrument.

PAI teacher innovation cannot operate in isolation. Literature (Trust et al., 2016; Zhao & Frank, 2003) consistently demonstrates that ecosystem support through communities of practice is the key to success. Innovative teachers are those capable of sharing pedagogical innovations collaboratively. This is supported by the findings of Munir & Saputra (2024) that the technological readiness of PAI teachers is significantly influenced by institutional support and involvement in adaptive professional networks.

3. Forms of Digital-Based Islamic Education Learning Innovation

The following is a synthesis of the literature focusing on the Forms of Digital-Based Islamic Religious Education Learning Innovation (Table 3).

Table 3. Synthesis of Digital-Based PAI Learning Innovation Forms

Innovation Form	Implementation Example	Contribution to Islamic Values
Immersive (VR/AR)	Hajj Ritual Simulation (Pratama & Syarifuddin, 2024)	Cultivating empathy and spiritual <i>khusyu'</i> (devotion).
Gamification	Memorization & <i>Fiqh</i> Apps (Ramadhan & Fitriani, 2025)	Habituation of discipline and honesty.
Adaptive Learning	<i>Blended Learning</i> Systems (Aswandi & Quddus, 2025)	Personalized learning based on individual needs.
Digital Platforms	<i>Learning Management Systems</i> (Lathifah, 2024)	Collaborative knowledge construction space.

A synthesis of the 22 identified literatures indicates that PAI learning innovation in the digital era is not merely a migration to online platforms, but a transformation of the learning experience that integrates technical sophistication with substantive values. Effective innovation in PAI is characterized by three primary forms:

a. Immersive Learning Innovation

The use of technologies such as Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR) has introduced a new paradigm in PAI learning, particularly for practical-ritualistic materials. The literature asserts that these technologies function as an effective *wasilah* (means) for building empathy and emotional attachment (Pratama & Syarifuddin, 2024).

b. Gamification-Based Innovation for Motivation and Value Habituation

Gamification is identified not only as a tool to increase engagement but also as a mechanism for instilling discipline and moral values (*akhlaq*) through instant feedback (Self-Determination Theory). Research shows that gamification is effective in enhancing the intrinsic motivation of Madrasah students in *Fiqh* subjects and Qur'an memorization (Ramadhan & Fitriani, 2025).

c. Adaptive Learning Innovation

Artificial Intelligence (AI)-based technology enables adaptive learning, where materials are adjusted to the individual learner's pace. When combined with a *Blended Learning* approach, this integration has proven capable of overcoming the limitations of face-to-face interaction in the classroom (Means et al., 2013; Aswandi & Quddus, 2025)

The study identifies that the PAI teacher's strategic role in the digital era extends beyond the function of an instructor. These findings strengthen Zulkifli et al. (2024)'s argument that teachers are drivers of innovation. However, this study goes further by concluding that the PAI teacher's position is that of an *ethical gatekeeper*. Teachers no longer just distribute content but curate digital information entering the classroom to ensure relevance to moral demands. Successful technology integration in PAI is that which can blend the sophistication of *blended learning* models or interactive multimedia with the depth of contextual delivery of Islamic values.

Furthermore, learning innovation is now beginning to adopt Gamification theory to increase students' emotional and cognitive engagement. Game elements such as points and leaderboards are integrated into Islamic material (e.g., Quranic memorization) to trigger intrinsic motivation in accordance with *Self-Determination Theory* (SDT) (Ramadhan & Fitriani, 2025). Additionally, the utilization of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Virtual Reality (VR) offers personalized learning (*adaptive learning*). VR technology enables immersive simulations such as virtual Hajj *manasik*, which not only provide a visual experience but also build deep emotional and spiritual engagement through *immersive learning* experiences (Pratama & Syarifuddin, 2024).

The use of VR for Hajj *manasik* is not merely a visual simulation, but an instrument to build empathy and *khushu* (solemnity) often lost in theoretical learning. Likewise with gamification; it is not just to increase scores, but to build habituation of values (such as discipline and honesty) through instant feedback mechanisms. This innovation proves that technology is a *wasilah* capable of bringing students closer to a dynamic religious reality.

Learning innovation in Islamic Education must not fall into the trap of superficial digitalization. The literature indicates that forms of innovation such as VR and gamification are merely technical instruments. The key argument of this research is that the effectiveness of such innovations depends heavily on the *Value-Added TPACK* framework.

If VR technology is used for Hajj simulations, it must be integrated with *content* that emphasizes the essence of *khusyu'* (devotion) and the philosophy of worship, rather than just providing a visual experience. In line with the findings of Silvester et al. (2024), technology must be positioned as a catalyst within *Value-Added TPACK* that synergizes a teacher's pedagogical competence with the depth of moral values (*content*). Consequently, digital-based innovation in PAI inherently transforms from a mere tool for efficiency into a more meaningful medium for value habituation for learners.

4. Challenges and Opportunities in Innovative Learning Implementation

The following is the synthesis of the literature regarding the Challenges and Opportunities for Implementing Innovative Learning:

Table 4. Analysis of Challenges and Opportunities for PAI Innovation Implementation

Dimension	Primary Challenge	Strategic Opportunity	Key References
Psychological	Technophobia & Ontological Gap	Value reorientation (Habituation)	Munir & Saputra (2024)
Pedagogical	Low digital literacy	Digital Citizenship (Digital Morality)	Fauzi & Handayani (2025)

Institutional	Limited system support	<i>Communities of Practice</i> (CoP)	Trust et al. (2016); Zhao & Frank (2003)
Strategic	Value degradation in digitalization	Transformation into <i>Ethical Gatekeeper</i>	Fatimah & Huda (2024)

Based on the analysis of 22 literatures, the implementation of innovative learning in Islamic Education does not occur in a vacuum, but within a complex ecosystem. The identified challenges and opportunities are synthesized as follows:

a. Challenge: The 'Ontological Gap' and Value Readiness

The primary challenge emerging in the literature is not the limitation of hardware, but an ontological gap the distance between the speed of technological innovation and the readiness of teachers' values to integrate it. Many PAI teachers experience *technophobia*, not due to technical inability, but due to concerns regarding value degradation (Munir & Saputra, 2024). The literature indicates that low digital literacy often acts as a barrier for teachers in assuming the role of confident innovators (Rahman & Hakim, 2024; Howard et al., 2015).

b. Opportunity: Digital Citizenship as a Foundation for Morality

On the other hand, the digital era offers significant opportunities for Islamic Education to revitalize the concept of *Digital Citizenship*. The literature emphasizes that if Islamic Education is able to guide learners toward responsible technology use, values such as *fathanah* (digital intelligence) can serve as a foundation for morality in cyberspace (Fauzi & Handayani, 2025; Pranowo & Abdullah, 2024).

c. The Role of Ecosystems and Communities of Practice

The success of innovation is highly dependent on institutional support (*Institutional Support Framework*) and the existence of *Communities of Practice*. The literature shows that innovation conducted in isolation tends to fail or be unsustainable. PAI teachers who are part of adaptive professional networks have proven more capable of overcoming implementation challenges compared to those working independently (Trust et al., 2016; Zhao & Frank, 2003).

Despite its great potential, the implementation of innovative learning still faces primary obstacles, namely the low digital literacy of some teachers, facility limitations, and a lack of institutional support. However, viewed from the *Technology Readiness Index* (TRI) perspective, the main challenge also lies in psychological aspects such as *technophobia*. Significant opportunities arise through the *Digital Citizenship* concept, where Islamic Education can guide students to use technology responsibly based on the value of *fathanah* (digital intelligence) (Fauzi & Handayani, 2025).

Ecosystem support through an *Institutional Support Framework* policy is key to mitigating digital risks. Global collaboration opportunities through *Communities of Practice* allow teachers to share pedagogical innovations inclusively and adaptively. Overall, the PAI teacher's role as an innovator is the main key. The integration of digital competence, pedagogical creativity, and commitment to Islamic values is a determining factor in realizing innovative, effective, and relevant learning in line with the digital era's demands (Munir & Saputra, 2024).

The main challenge is not infrastructure limitation, but the 'ontological gap' between the speed of technology and the readiness of the teacher's values. Mitigation strategies cannot rely solely on technical training (*digital literacy*), but on the development of *Communities of Practice* based on value reflection. The greatest opportunity for PAI today is to utilize the digital ecosystem to expand the reach of *dakwah* (preaching) and education, provided PAI teachers can transform themselves from mere technology users into drivers of value-based digital ecosystems.

The analysis of these various challenges confirms that mitigation strategies in Islamic Education cannot rely solely on technical training (digital literacy). The main argument of this research is the need for a paradigm shift from tool-based functional training toward value-based reflection. Challenges in

implementing innovation in Madrasahs are often rooted in the fear of the dehumanization of education by technology. Therefore, the greatest opportunity for PAI today lies in leveraging the digital ecosystem to expand the reach of *dakwah* (proselytizing), provided that PAI teachers are able to transform themselves from mere technology users into drivers of a value-based digital ecosystem. This success can only be achieved through *Communities of Practice* that enable PAI teachers to collectively reconceptualize their role as *ethical gatekeepers*, ensuring that every implemented innovation remains within the corridor of *Value-Added TPACK*.

Conclusion

This study has conceptualized the strategic role of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers as digital innovators through a comprehensive literature synthesis. The findings affirm that innovation in PAI learning in the digital era is not merely a pragmatic adoption of technology, but a pedagogical transformation that requires teachers to become *ethical gatekeepers*. The primary *novelty* of this article lies in the development of the *Value-Added TPACK* model where technology and pedagogy are explicitly synergized with moral values providing an operational foundation for teachers to maintain moral authority amidst information disruption.

The *state of the art* of this research lies in the paradigm shift from mere "material digitization" to the "Islamization of technology." Unlike previous studies that tend to view technology as a neutral instrument, this research offers a theoretical framework proposing that technology in PAI is a *wasilah* (means) that must have its meaning curated to ensure it does not degrade spiritual values.

Theoretically, this research contributes to the development of PAI discourse in the digital era by proposing a learning model that balances *Higher Order Thinking Skills* (HOTS) with *Higher Order Spiritual Skills*. This model enriches Vygotsky's social constructivism discourse by adding a dimension of digital ethics relevant to the needs of the community.

Practically, these findings provide strategic guidance for educational institutions and policymakers to design teacher competency development programs that are no longer partial. Future professional training for PAI teachers must focus on methodologies for value integration within the digital ecosystem, ensuring that educational transformation does not stop at technical proficiency but is capable of addressing the challenges of integrating future technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI) and *Virtual Reality* while remaining consistent with the values of *tauhid*. To strengthen the validity of the proposed *Value-Added TPACK* model, it is recommended that future research conduct quantitative empirical studies to test the model's effectiveness on student character outcomes in the field. Furthermore, research regarding the direct influence of teachers' digital literacy on the quality of students' spiritual output in cyberspace is a crucial area to be developed as a subsequent step to ensure the future relevance of PAI.

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