



## Leveraging Digital Media to Enhance Students' Spiritual Competence in Islamic Religious Education

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.61987/jemr.v4i2.1781>

### ABSTRACT

#### Keywords:

Digital Media,  
Spiritual Competence,  
Islamic Religious  
Education

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This study aims to analyze the utilization of digital media in enhancing students' spiritual competence in Islamic Religious Education (PAI). The research is motivated by the increasing integration of technology in education, which needs to be balanced with the reinforcement of students' spiritual values. A qualitative descriptive approach was employed, with data collected through observations, interviews, and document analysis. The findings indicate that PAI teachers have effectively used various digital media, including instructional videos, digital Qur'an applications, and interactive platforms such as Google Classroom, Canva, and Padlet, to facilitate learning. The use of digital media was found to enhance students' religious awareness, spiritual reflection, and learning motivation. Nevertheless, challenges remain, such as limited teacher digital literacy and internet accessibility. Overall, digital media plays a significant role in strengthening students' spiritual competence when integrated appropriately and grounded in Islamic values. The study recommends improving teachers' digital competencies and developing a technology-based PAI learning model that incorporates value education.

#### Article History:

Received: November 2025; Revised: December 2025; Accepted: January 2026

#### Please cite this article in APA style as:

Aisyah, R. D., Muhyi, N., Ngantori, & Santoso, W. E. (2026). Leveraging Digital Media to Enhance Students' Spiritual Competence in Islamic Religious Education. *Journal of Educational Management Research*, 4(2), 960-969.

## INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of information and communication technology has significantly transformed various aspects of society, including the field of education. In particular, the emergence of the digital era and Society 5.0 has created new demands for learning innovations that integrate technological sophistication with the spiritual and moral values of students (Yumarni, 2019; Abror & Sassi, 2025). Education plays a critical role not only in imparting knowledge but also in shaping ethical and spiritual competencies that support holistic human development (Hefniy & Alwahedi, 2025; Hikmah & Mudarris, 2026; Holidi, 2025; Syafiih, 2025). When technology is applied thoughtfully, it

offers opportunities to enhance the quality and engagement of learning. Conversely, unstructured or unmonitored use of digital media may undermine students' religious awareness and moral development (Rojak, 2024). Therefore, examining how digital tools can be leveraged to reinforce spiritual values is highly relevant to contemporary society (Dewi & Manshur, 2026; Khofsah & Rozi, 2025; Kusumawati, 2025). Addressing this issue is crucial to ensure that technological progress complements, rather than conflicts with, moral and religious education, contributing to the development of well-rounded individuals.

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) holds a strategic role in nurturing students' faith, piety, and ethical behavior (Muhammad & Aladdiin, n.d.). National education regulations, such as Law Number 20 of 2003 on the National Education System, emphasize that education must develop learners' potential to become faithful and God-conscious individuals (Adhinugraha et al., 2024; Ni'am et al., 2025; Rozi, 2023; Saepudin et al., 2023). However, current educational practices often prioritize cognitive outcomes while underemphasizing spiritual and moral development (Syafuruddin, 2025). This imbalance becomes more critical as students increasingly engage with digital technologies that can both support and challenge their spiritual growth (Ghozali, 2024; Holis et al., 2024; Honainah et al., 2025; Jasri, 2025; Sholehah & Ichsan, 2025). The societal challenge lies in ensuring that students' exposure to technology does not weaken their religious and moral foundations but rather becomes a medium to reinforce these values. Consequently, integrating digital media into PAI requires deliberate pedagogical strategies that align technological use with spiritual objectives, making this research both timely and socially significant.

Despite the recognized importance of spiritual development, the implementation of PAI often remains conventional, teacher-centered, and insufficiently adaptive to the learning preferences of digital-native students (Zahfa et al., 2025). Contemporary students are more attracted to visually rich and interactive media, such as videos, animations, and digital content, compared to traditional lectures or rote memorization methods (Qutub, 2025). This mismatch between teaching approaches and student expectations creates both a challenge and an opportunity for PAI teachers (Bukhori & Zahro, 2025; Fawaid et al., 2025; Naningsih et al., 2024; Thohir, 2024). On the one hand, conventional methods risk disengagement and superficial understanding; on the other, the strategic use of digital media can enhance engagement, understanding, and internalization of spiritual values. Educators are therefore compelled to innovate by designing digital learning experiences that are pedagogically sound and spiritually meaningful, ensuring that students' religious awareness and moral development are actively nurtured alongside digital literacy.

Previous studies have highlighted the potential of digital media to enhance learning outcomes and student motivation in religious education (Dalimunthe et al., 2023). Tools such as instructional videos, digital Qur'an applications, podcasts, and collaborative platforms like YouTube, Canva, and Padlet provide opportunities for interactive, participatory, and reflective learning experiences (Imamah et al., 2025). These studies indicate that technology can support spiritual learning by facilitating accessible, engaging, and contextually relevant experiences (Arifin, 2024; Rohmatillah & Jannah, 2024; Sanjani, 2024). However, most research has focused primarily on general motivation and engagement, with limited attention to the specific development of students' spiritual competence, such as religious awareness, ethical reasoning, and reflective practice.

Furthermore, existing literature reveals challenges in effectively integrating digital media into PAI, including limitations in teacher digital literacy and unequal access to technological resources (Maulida & Ratnasari, 2024). While studies have reported positive outcomes of technology-assisted religious education, they often lack comprehensive analysis of implementation strategies and contextual obstacles in school settings. This gap emphasizes the need for research that systematically examines how digital tools are utilized to strengthen students' spiritual competence, including both successes and constraints. Addressing this gap is important to inform practical pedagogical models that balance technological engagement with the cultivation of ethical and spiritual values, ensuring that digitalization in education contributes meaningfully to students' holistic development.

This study contributes to the state of the art by exploring the specific role of digital media in enhancing students' spiritual competence in PAI, beyond general engagement or motivation. Unlike prior research that focuses on technology adoption or classroom management, this study emphasizes the alignment of digital tools with spiritual and moral objectives. By examining multiple digital platforms and applications within a structured pedagogical framework, the research provides insights into best practices for integrating technology in a manner that preserves and strengthens religious values. The novelty lies in its dual focus: promoting digital literacy and facilitating spiritual growth simultaneously, a combination that remains underexplored in Islamic educational research.

Based on the above context, this study addresses the research problem: how can digital media be effectively utilized to strengthen students' spiritual competence in PAI? Preliminary evidence suggests that properly integrated digital tools can enhance religious awareness, reflective thinking, and ethical behavior, while improper use may diminish these outcomes (Dalimunthe et al.,

2023; Imamah et al., 2025). By systematically analyzing the implementation, benefits, and challenges of digital media in PAI, this research aims to provide practical guidance for educators and policymakers. The study argues that combining technological innovation with value-based education creates a learning environment where students' spiritual, moral, and digital competencies develop in parallel, contributing to holistic human development in the digital era.

## RESEACH METHOD

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach, aiming to provide an in-depth understanding of how digital media is utilized in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) to strengthen students' spiritual competence (Khairani et al., 2025). The qualitative approach was chosen because it allows researchers to explore phenomena contextually and naturally, reflecting the authentic conditions in the field (Adlini et al., 2022). This design emphasizes detailed descriptions, interpretations, and meanings derived from participants' experiences, making it suitable for investigating complex educational practices where both technological and spiritual dimensions intersect (Hennink & Kaiser, 2022; Nasir et al., 2023; Okoko et al., 2023; Salmona & Kaczynski, 2024). By adopting a descriptive qualitative framework, the study captures not only the forms of digital media used but also their perceived effects on students' religious awareness, reflective practice, and moral development.

The research was conducted at SMA Negeri X, Tanjung Jabung Timur, a school that has implemented PAI learning with the support of digital media. The site was deliberately selected due to its established integration of technology in religious education, providing a relevant context for observing digital media utilization. This setting allows the study to capture real-life practices and challenges associated with technology-based PAI, ensuring that findings reflect authentic interactions between teachers, students, and digital learning tools. By situating the research in this specific school, the study can provide contextually grounded insights applicable to similar educational environments.

Data were collected using multiple techniques to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon. Observation was conducted during PAI lessons to document the use of digital media, including instructional videos, digital Qur'an applications, and online platforms such as Google Classroom, YouTube, Canva, and Padlet. In-depth interviews were conducted with the PAI teacher and selected students to explore perceptions, experiences, and the impact of digital media on spiritual value reinforcement. Documentation involved collecting lesson plans (RPP), learning materials, student assignments, and screenshots of digital activities during the learning process. Participants included one PAI teacher and 25 students from grade XI, selected through purposive

sampling based on criteria such as active use of digital media in PAI and direct experience with technology-assisted learning.

Data were analyzed interactively following the Miles and Huberman model (2014), comprising three main stages: data reduction, which involves condensing and selecting relevant information; data display, which organizes the data into tables, charts, and narratives for clarity; and conclusion drawing and verification, which interprets the findings in relation to research objectives. To ensure data validity, triangulation of sources and methods was employed, comparing observations, interview responses, and documentation results. Additionally, member checks were conducted with the PAI teacher and students to confirm the accuracy and credibility of the interpretations. This systematic approach ensures that the analysis captures both the depth and authenticity of participants' experiences with digital media in PAI.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **Utilization of Digital Media in Islamic Religious Education (PAI)**

Based on observations, interviews, and documentation at SMA Negeri X, Tanjung Jabung Timur, this study found that the utilization of digital media in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) has a significant impact on enhancing students' spiritual competence. PAI teachers actively employ various digital tools, such as instructional videos on Islamic teachings, digital Qur'an applications (Quran Best, Muslim Pro, and Ayat), and interactive platforms including Google Classroom, Canva, and Padlet. Through these media, the learning process becomes more interactive, creative, and reflective, enabling students not only to receive information passively but also to participate in creating digital content with Islamic values, such as posters on ethics, short da'wah videos, and infographics on Islamic principles. These activities foster religious awareness, spiritual responsibility, and reflective understanding of Islamic teachings in daily life.

Moreover, the use of digital media enhances students' motivation, independence, and religious literacy. Students exhibit high enthusiasm for technology-based learning, as the materials are engaging and aligned with the characteristics of digital-native learners. Observations indicate that digital media is not merely a teaching aid but a means for internalizing spiritual values in a contemporary context. Integrating technology with Islamic principles makes PAI learning more relevant and appealing to digital-native students, who tend to favor visual and collaborative learning environments. This aligns with Surjono's (2022) perspective that educational media can clarify learning messages, enhance motivation, and overcome constraints of space and time (H. Sujono AR, 2022).

### **Forms of Digital Media Utilization in PAI**

Digital media in PAI serves not only as a visual aid but also as a medium for spiritual character development, allowing students to access Islamic resources, engage in discussions, and apply religious teachings in a contextualized manner (Tinggi et al., n.d.). Observations revealed that teachers employ various media to create interactive and contextually relevant learning experiences. Instructional videos featuring the exemplary life of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) and moral values are sourced from platforms such as YouTube. Digital Qur'an applications like Quran Best, Muslim Pro, and Ayat help students read and understand the meaning of verses. Canva and Padlet are used for reflective tasks, such as creating posters about sincerity or infographics on the importance of congregational prayers. Google Classroom serves as a platform for interaction, discussion, and assignment submission.

This integration transforms PAI into a participatory, student-centered learning experience, where teachers act as spiritual facilitators, guiding students to maintain Islamic values while learning through digital tools. The findings support the constructivist theory of religious learning, which emphasizes the construction of knowledge and spirituality through meaningful and reflective experiences. Consequently, the use of digital media in PAI can effectively sustain the relevance and appeal of religious education amidst globalization and evolving learning cultures.

### **Impact of Digital Media on Students' Spiritual Competence**

Interviews with teachers and students revealed that digital media significantly strengthens spiritual competence, particularly in areas of faith, worship, and ethical behavior. Visualized content, such as da'wah videos and Islamic-themed short films, helps students reflect on faith and piety. Engaging in digital content creation, such as producing short videos or Islamic quotes, fosters spiritual reflection, responsibility, and the application of religious values in contemporary life (Nugroho, 2023).

Guided use of digital platforms also promotes Islamic digital ethics, teaching students to maintain politeness in online interactions, select positive content, and use social media for da'wah purposes. Furthermore, digital media supports independent learning, allowing students to access additional Islamic resources, strengthen religious literacy, and enhance engagement in learning (Fitriyani, 2022). These results confirm Zubaedi's (2019) view that authentic Islamic education not only conveys religious knowledge but also fosters internalized spiritual and moral awareness in students' behavior.

## **Challenges and Solutions in Implementing Digital Media**

Despite its benefits, several challenges were identified in implementing digital media in PAI. Teacher digital literacy is still limited, particularly regarding the creation of content aligned with Islamic values. Unequal internet access also prevents some students from fully participating in online learning. Additionally, distractions from non-educational content, such as entertainment media, can reduce students' focus.

To overcome these challenges, PAI teachers employ several strategies. They participate in digital learning training programs through teacher working groups or self-initiated courses, encourage collaborative digital projects with religious themes, and provide guidance on Islamic digital ethics. These measures emphasize responsibility, politeness, and self-control in the online environment (Rahman, 2023), ensuring that digital media contributes positively to spiritual and moral development while maintaining students' engagement and learning effectiveness.

## **CONCLUSION**

The findings of this study indicate that the utilization of digital media in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) has a positive impact on enhancing students' spiritual competence. Through the use of instructional videos, digital Qur'an applications, interactive platforms, and creative content based on Islamic values, students are able to internalize religious teachings in a more engaging, reflective, and contextual manner. Digital media functions not only as a learning aid but also as a means for developing religious character, fostering spiritual awareness, and promoting independent learning motivation. The study highlights the importance of integrating technology thoughtfully to maintain the relevance of PAI while supporting students' spiritual growth, offering practical insights for educators on leveraging digital tools in value-based education.

Despite these positive outcomes, several limitations were identified, including teachers' limited digital literacy, unequal access to the internet, and potential distractions from non-educational content. Future research should explore strategies for enhancing teachers' technological competencies, developing Islamic digital ethics for students, and designing technology-based PAI learning models grounded in spiritual values. By addressing these challenges, subsequent studies can further strengthen the theoretical and practical understanding of how digital media can serve as an effective bridge between technological advancement and the cultivation of spiritual competence in Islamic education.

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