

Islamic Religious Education Teachers as Digital-Spiritual Navigators: Developing Students' Digital Literacy in the Society 5.0 Era

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ABSTRACT

The Society 5.0 era positions digital technology within a human-centered social system, requiring schools to develop students' ability to access, evaluate, create, and communicate information responsibly. This article analyzes the role of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) teachers in developing students' digital literacy and formulates a conceptual model of the teacher as a digital-spiritual navigator. The study employed an integrative library review with a qualitative descriptive-critical approach. Literature was retrieved from Google Scholar, Scopus, Sinta, official policy repositories, and institutional databases using Indonesian and English keywords related to Islamic religious education, teacher digital competence, digital literacy, Society 5.0, media literacy, and digital ethics. Contemporary peer-reviewed publications from 2020–2026 were prioritized, while foundational frameworks were retained where conceptually necessary. Data were analyzed through thematic coding, content comparison, and conceptual synthesis. The findings identify three dimensions of Islamic digital literacy: digital tabayyun, Islamic cyber-ethics, and productive digital participation. They also establish four interconnected roles for IRE teachers: pedagogical facilitator, religious-content curator, ethical mentor, and collaborative digital guardian. Implementation is constrained by unequal infrastructure, limited professional digital competence, weak institutional policy, and inconsistent family supervision. The study proposes a five-level implementation framework covering values, pedagogy, content curation, institutional support, and evaluation. The framework contributes to Islamic education scholarship by translating prophetic values into observable digital-literacy practices. Empirical research is required to test its applicability across different school contexts.

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INTRODUCTION

Society 5.0 was introduced as a human-centered social vision in which cyberspace and physical space are integrated to support economic development and address social problems (Cabinet Office, Government of Japan, n.d.). In education, this vision places greater emphasis on learners' capacity to use data, artificial intelligence, digital platforms, and networked information without losing human agency, ethical judgment, or social responsibility. Digital transformation therefore cannot be reduced to the availability of devices. It requires changes in pedagogy, school culture, teacher competence, governance, and equitable access (Timotheou et al., 2023).

Digital literacy is similarly broader than technical operation. It includes the capacity to locate, interpret, evaluate, create, communicate, and act on digital information critically and responsibly. International frameworks position digital competence as a combination of knowledge, skills, attitudes, ethics, safety, communication, and participation (UNESCO, 2023). Research on teacher digital competence further shows that effective technology integration depends on pedagogical design, content knowledge, critical evaluation, and professional reflection rather than on software proficiency alone (Pinto-Santos et al., 2022; Skantz-Åberg et al., 2022).

In Islamic Religious Education (IRE), the digital challenge is especially complex because students increasingly encounter religious information through social media, search engines, short-form video, and generative artificial intelligence. These channels widen access to religious knowledge but also expose students to decontextualized interpretations, misinformation, ideological polarization, hate speech, and content that lacks accountable scholarly authority. Digital religion research has demonstrated that online media reshape religious identity, authority, community, and practice rather than functioning merely as neutral channels (Campbell & Evolvi, 2020).

IRE teachers consequently need to combine technological, pedagogical, religious, and ethical competence. Indonesian studies show that many PAI teachers have begun using presentation software, video platforms, learning-management systems, and mobile applications, yet differences in infrastructure, training, and institutional support continue to limit meaningful integration (Amaly et al., 2021; Lisyawati et al., 2023; Reksiana et al., 2024). These limitations indicate that the teacher's role must extend beyond technology use toward critical guidance, source verification, ethical modeling, and protection of students' digital well-being.

Previous studies have examined teacher digital competence, technology-based PAI learning, digital media literacy, and the challenges of Islamic education in the digital era. However, much of this literature treats digital literacy functionally or discusses teacher roles separately from Islamic ethical principles. The relationship between critical information evaluation,

religious authority, online conduct, productive participation, and teacher supervision has not been sufficiently synthesized into a unified model. This article addresses that gap by conceptualizing the IRE teacher as a digital-spiritual navigator.

The novelty of this study lies in integrating general digital-literacy frameworks with three Islamic ethical orientations: *tabayyun* as disciplined verification, *akhlak* as responsible digital conduct, and *maslahah* as productive participation for public benefit. The study addresses three questions: (1) How should digital literacy be reconstructed within Islamic Religious Education? (2) What roles should IRE teachers perform in developing students' digital literacy? and (3) What barriers and institutional strategies shape its implementation in the Society 5.0 era?

METHODS

This study employed an integrative library review with a qualitative descriptive-critical design. An integrative review was selected because the study combined empirical research, conceptual literature, professional competency frameworks, government policy, and studies of Islamic education to produce a new conceptual synthesis rather than a statistical meta-analysis.

The literature search was conducted from January to July 2026 through Google Scholar, Scopus, Sinta, journal portals, and official institutional repositories. Search strings combined the terms "Islamic Religious Education teacher," "guru PAI," "digital literacy," "digital competence," "Society 5.0," "media literacy," "digital ethics," "religious authority online," "tabayyun," and "technology integration." Contemporary peer-reviewed publications from 2020–2026 were prioritized. Foundational publications and official frameworks outside that period were retained when required to define Society 5.0, digital competence, and media literacy.

Inclusion criteria were: direct relevance to teacher digital competence, Islamic education, student digital literacy, digital ethics, or school digital transformation; publication as a peer-reviewed journal article, authoritative report, or official policy document; availability of identifiable bibliographic information; and publication in Indonesian or English. Opinion pieces without scholarly support, duplicated records, incidental references, and unverifiable publications were excluded.

Analysis proceeded in four stages. First, each source was read and coded for definitions, teacher roles, student competencies, barriers, and implementation strategies. Second, deductive categories were developed from digital-literacy frameworks, while inductive categories emerged from Islamic education literature. Third, the categories were compared across national and international sources. Fourth, the relationships were synthesized into a conceptual model comprising three student-literacy dimensions and four teacher roles. To improve credibility, claims based on literature were distinguished from the authors' conceptual propositions, and broad statements were phrased cautiously.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Reconstructing Digital Literacy through Islamic Ethics

Digital literacy in IRE should not be limited to operating applications or retrieving information. It must integrate technical competence, critical evaluation, communication, ethical judgment, and purposeful participation. This broader understanding is consistent with UNESCO's teacher competency framework and systematic reviews emphasizing that digital competence involves pedagogy, professional practice, critical awareness, and learner empowerment (Pinto-Santos et al., 2022; UNESCO, 2023).

The first dimension is digital *tabayyun*. In the digital environment, *tabayyun* can be operationalized as identifying the original source, examining author expertise, comparing claims across credible references, distinguishing fact from opinion, checking context, and delaying dissemination until verification is complete. This dimension is particularly important for religious content because short videos and algorithmic recommendations can detach quotations from their interpretive traditions. Critical literacy therefore becomes both an academic practice and a moral responsibility.

The second dimension is Islamic cyber-ethics. Students need guidance in applying honesty, trustworthiness, respect, privacy, empathy, and non-harm to online communication and content production. Digital competence frameworks increasingly recognize ethics, safety, and responsible participation as central elements, while AI research highlights risks involving bias, surveillance, misinformation, and opaque decision-making (Celik et al., 2022; UNESCO, 2021). In IRE, these concerns can be connected with *siddiq*, *amanah*, *adab*, and responsibility before God and society.

The third dimension is productive digital participation. Students should not remain passive consumers of religious content. They can be guided to create accurate, inclusive, and context-sensitive learning materials, campaigns, podcasts, infographics, and short videos. Productive participation reflects the human-centered orientation of Society 5.0 because digital technology is directed toward learning, social benefit, and problem solving rather than attention capture alone (Cabinet Office, Government of Japan, n.d.; Timotheou et al., 2023).

This reconstruction also clarifies that Islamic digital literacy should be assessed through performance rather than through self-reported technical confidence alone. Students should be able to demonstrate how they verify a religious claim, explain the ethical consequences of sharing uncertain information, protect personal data, acknowledge sources, and create content that benefits others. Such assessment connects *tabayyun*, *adab*, and *maslahah* with observable learning outcomes and prevents Islamic values from remaining abstract additions to otherwise conventional digital-skills instruction (Rosfiani et al., 2021; Sulistyo & Ismarti, 2022).

The IRE Teacher as a Digital-Spiritual Navigator

Pedagogical facilitator. IRE teachers should design learning experiences in which students investigate digital religious claims, compare sources, discuss ethical dilemmas, and produce evidence-based responses. Technology becomes meaningful when it supports inquiry, collaboration, reflection, and contextual application. Reviews of digital transformation show that learning outcomes depend on pedagogical alignment and institutional capacity rather than the mere presence of technology (Timotheou et al., 2023).

Religious content curator. Teachers need to direct students toward reliable, moderate, and academically accountable sources. Curation involves explaining why a source is credible, differentiating scholarly authority from popularity, and exposing students to diverse but responsible interpretations. Indonesian research on PAI technology use indicates that teachers already function as selectors of learning media, but this role requires stronger critical-literacy procedures (Amaly et al., 2021; Lisyawati et al., 2023).

Ethical mentor and role model. Digital ethics is learned not only through rules but also through consistent teacher practice. Teachers should model attribution, respectful disagreement, privacy protection, accurate citation, and responsible use of artificial intelligence. Professional digital competence includes reflective and ethical dimensions, making teacher behavior an important component of student formation (Skantz-Åberg et al., 2022).

Collaborative digital guardian. Protection cannot be understood as surveillance alone. Teachers should collaborate with school leaders, counselors, families, and students to develop agreed boundaries, reporting mechanisms, and restorative responses to cyberbullying, misinformation, compulsive use, and harmful content. This role combines supervision with student agency and digital well-being.

The four roles should be understood as an integrated professional profile rather than as separate tasks. A teacher who can operate digital applications but cannot evaluate religious sources remains pedagogically incomplete; similarly, a teacher who understands religious content but avoids contemporary platforms may have limited influence on students' actual digital practices. The digital-spiritual navigator therefore combines subject expertise, pedagogical design, critical media literacy, ethical modeling, and collaborative safeguarding. This integrated profile is consistent with studies emphasizing that professional digital competence develops through the interaction of technology, pedagogy, reflection, and institutional context (Fernández-Batanero et al., 2022; Skantz-Åberg et al., 2022).

Structural Barriers and Institutional Strategies

Literature on school digital transformation identifies infrastructure, leadership, teacher competence, professional development, resource quality, and

school culture as interdependent factors (Timotheou et al., 2023). In Indonesian Islamic education, unequal access and uneven ICT mastery remain visible, particularly where teachers receive limited training or technical assistance (Amaly et al., 2021; Reksiana et al., 2024). The problem is therefore institutional as well as individual.

Professional development should move beyond one-time application training. Teachers need sustained learning in digital pedagogy, critical media literacy, AI ethics, source evaluation, online assessment, and digital safeguarding. Systematic reviews indicate that teacher education interventions are more effective when they connect technology with subject content, pedagogy, collaboration, and reflective practice (Celik et al., 2022; Pinto-Santos et al., 2022).

Schools also need clear policies covering acceptable AI use, student privacy, digital conduct, source attribution, content verification, and responses to online harm. Such policies should avoid purely punitive control. They should explain educational purposes, protect rights, define responsibilities, and provide mechanisms for appeal and support. Family engagement is equally important because students' digital behavior crosses school and home environments.

Hybrid learning can support IRE when face-to-face dialogue, moral modeling, and spiritual reflection are retained. Digital tools should enrich rather than replace relational pedagogy. For example, teachers may combine direct discussion of Qur'anic ethics with digital fact-checking exercises, collaborative annotation, moderated forums, and student-produced public-interest content.

Implementation should also be sensitive to differences among schools. Institutions with limited connectivity can emphasize offline verification exercises, teacher-curated digital archives, and shared-device learning, while schools with stronger infrastructure can develop multimedia production, AI-assisted inquiry, and cross-class digital projects. A differentiated strategy is more realistic than imposing a single technological model, because sustainable transformation depends on local leadership, teacher readiness, technical support, and the socioeconomic conditions of learners (Ningsih et al., 2021; Timotheou et al., 2023).

Proposed Implementation Framework

The proposed framework translates the conceptual findings into a sequence of institutional actions. The value level establishes the ethical foundation by positioning *tabayyun*, *amanah*, *adab*, and *maslahah* as criteria for digital decision-making. These values should be stated in language that students can apply, such as verifying before sharing, respecting privacy, acknowledging authorship, avoiding humiliation, and considering the social consequences of digital content. This operationalization allows religious principles to guide concrete behavior rather than remain limited to moral slogans.

At the pedagogical and curation levels, teachers design activities that require students to compare sources, identify evidence, analyze algorithmic recommendations, and produce responsible content. Religious-content curation is especially important because online popularity does not guarantee scholarly authority. Teachers can use annotated reading lists, source-evaluation rubrics, comparative interpretation tasks, and guided fact-checking to help students distinguish credible scholarship from sensational or decontextualized material (Campbell & Evolvi, 2020; Lisyawati et al., 2023).

The institutional-support level recognizes that individual teacher innovation is unlikely to be sustained without leadership, policy, infrastructure, and professional learning. Schools should provide regular training, technical assistance, data-protection procedures, guidance on generative AI, and time for teachers to design and evaluate digital learning materials. Institutional commitment is also necessary to prevent digital-literacy programs from depending entirely on a small number of enthusiastic teachers (Celik et al., 2022; UNESCO, 2023).

The evaluation level should examine both competence and character. Assessment may combine student portfolios, source-verification tasks, reflective journals, observation of online interaction, project rubrics, and records of digital-safety incidents. Evaluation should not be used only to punish misconduct; it should identify learning needs and improve support. By linking indicators to values, pedagogy, curation, and institutional conditions, the framework enables schools to monitor whether digital transformation genuinely strengthens critical thinking, ethical responsibility, and productive participation.

Table 1. Five-level framework for developing Islamic digital literacy in IRE learning

Level	Main focus	Illustrative practices	Indicators
Values	Tabayyun, amanah, adab, maslahah	Ethical agreements and case discussions	Students explain ethical reasons for digital decisions
Pedagogy	Critical and productive learning	Source comparison, digital projects, reflective discussion	Tasks assess verification, reasoning, and creation
Curation	Credible religious knowledge	Annotated source lists and authority mapping	Students distinguish credible and unreliable sources
Institutional support	Competence, infrastructure, and policy	Teacher development, privacy rules, AI guidance	Training participation and policy implementation
Evaluation	Learning, ethics, and well-being	Portfolio, observation, student reflection, incident review	Improved critical literacy and reduced harmful behavior

CONCLUSIONS

This study concludes that digital literacy in Islamic Religious Education should be understood as an integrated competence encompassing critical verification, ethical conduct, and productive participation. The proposed concepts of digital tabayyun, Islamic cyber-ethics, and productive digital participation translate Islamic values into observable practices for the digital environment.

IRE teachers are positioned as digital-spiritual navigators who perform four interconnected roles: pedagogical facilitator, religious-content curator, ethical mentor, and collaborative digital guardian. These roles require technological competence, pedagogical judgment, religious knowledge, ethical consistency, and cooperation with institutional and family stakeholders.

The study contributes a five-level implementation framework covering values, pedagogy, curation, institutional support, and evaluation. Its primary limitation is the library-review design, which does not demonstrate how the framework operates in particular schools. Future studies should test the model through case studies, teacher interviews, classroom observations, instrument development, and comparative research across schools with different infrastructure and student characteristics.

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