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Moral Decadence Among Students in the Digital Age: Challenges and Solutions in Learning Islamic Religious Education

Nafsia Marasabessy*, Ruslan Dahinang, Wisriani, Muminaya, Amaluddin
Universitas Muhammadiyah Parepare, nafsiamarasabessy94@gmail.com
Universitas Muhammadiyah Parepare, uyainahrus@gmail.com
Universitas Muhammadiyah Parepare, ani15071979@gmail.com
Universitas Muhammadiyah Parepare, muminayah@gmail.com
Universitas Muhammadiyah Parepare, amaluddin1965@gmail.com

*Corresponding Author Email: nafsiamarasabessy94@gmail.com

Article Info

ABSTRACT

Moral decadence among students in the digital era has become an alarming phenomenon along with the massive penetration of technology in the lives of the younger generation. This research aims to analyze the characteristics and factors causing student moral degradation in the digital era, identify challenges faced in Islamic Religious Education learning, and formulate effective strategies and solutions in shaping students' noble character. The research method uses a qualitative approach with library research that relies on secondary data from various scientific literature. The research results show that student moral decadence is characterized by increasing deviant behaviors such as online game addiction, cyberbullying, and consumption of negative content triggered by internal factors in the form of weak understanding of religious values and external factors in the form of easy access to technology without adequate supervision. The challenges of Islamic Religious Education learning include curricula that are not yet adaptive, low digital competence of educators, and minimal synergy between schools, families, and communities. The recommended solutions include digital transformation of learning based on tafsir tarbawi, strengthening critical digital literacy, and building a collaborative and holistic moral education ecosystem to form a generation that has moral resilience in the digital era.

INTRODUCTION

Massive digital transformation has fundamentally changed the landscape of human life, including in the aspects of education and character formation of the younger generation. The era of digitalization, which is marked by internet penetration that reaches more than 77 percent of the Indonesian population and the almost universal use of smart devices among students, has created a paradox in the world of education. On the one hand, digital technology opens up unlimited access to information and enriches learning methods, but on the other hand, the ease of access also has negative consequences for the degradation of moral values among students (Arjuna, 2024). The increasingly worrying phenomenon of moral decadence is reflected in various deviant behaviors such as the spread of pornographic content among teenagers, *Bullying* cyber, addiction *Online Games*, the abuse of social media for immoral acts, to the decline of politeness in interacting both in the virtual and real world. Data from the Indonesian Child Protection Commission shows an increase in cases of moral violations among students that are closely related to exposure to negative digital content (Zahraini, 2024). This condition raises fundamental questions about the effectiveness of character education, especially Islamic Religious Education as a moral fortress in facing the challenges of the complex and dynamic digital age.

Islamic religious education has a strategic role in shaping the personality of students who have good morals and adhere to Islamic values. However, Islamic Religious Education learning in the digital era faces multidimensional challenges, ranging from conventional learning methods, lack of effective technology integration, to the gap in understanding between learning materials and the reality of students' digital lives. Research shows that students spend an average of six to eight hours per day interacting with digital devices, while Islamic Religious Education learning only lasts two to three hours per week with an approach that often does not touch on the actual problems faced by students in cyberspace. This gap creates a cognitive dissonance in which students understand moral values theoretically but fail to implement them in everyday digital behavior (Amin, 2025). The urgency of this research lies in the need to formulate a learning strategy for Islamic Religious Education that is not only adaptive to technological developments, but also able to provide concrete solutions in overcoming the moral decadence that plagues generations *Digital Native*.

The literature review in this study includes several fundamental concepts that are the basis of the analysis. First, the concept of moral decadence refers to the deterioration or decline in the quality of ethical and moral values in individual and collective life. In the context of digital age students, moral decadence is manifested not only in real behavior but also in cyberspace that includes *Cyberbullying*, the spread of hoaxes, hate speech, and the consumption of pornographic content. Second, the learning theory of Islamic Religious Education which is based on Islamic pedagogical principles that emphasizes the formation of character through the understanding of faith, mastery of worship, and the practice of noble morals. Third, the concept of digital literacy refers to the ability of individuals to access, understand, evaluate, and use digital information wisely and responsibly. Fourth, theories about moral challenges in the digital age that include phenomena *Information overload*, *echo chamber*, and normalization of deviant behavior through social media that can erode the moral foundations of the younger generation (Wijayanti & Abdurrahman, 2025).

Previous research has explored various aspects related to moral degradation and religious education in diverse contexts. The study conducted by Nurjanah and Hakim identified that excessive exposure to digital media without adequate supervision contributes significantly to the decline in students' moral awareness. Other research shows that the integration of technology in Islamic Religious Education learning still faces technical and pedagogical obstacles that cause less than optimal achievement of learning objectives. Meanwhile, another study emphasizes the importance of a holistic approach in character education that integrates religious values with digital literacy skills. Phenomenon *Cyberbullying* as a form of moral degradation in the digital era, it has also become a serious concern in various studies that affirm the urgency of revitalizing Islamic Religious Education as a moral defense fortress (Zain & Mustain, 2024). These studies make an important contribution to understanding the problems faced, but there are still research gaps that need to be filled through more comprehensive and contextual studies.

Research gaps or *Gap Research* identified from previous studies lies in the lack of analysis that specifically explores the learning strategies of Islamic Religious Education in responding to the phenomenon of moral decadence that occurs among students in the digital age with an integrative and applicable approach. Most previous research has tended to address the problem separately, between moral degradation, the use of digital technology, and the learning of Islamic Religious Education, without connecting these three aspects in a single comprehensive analytical framework. In addition, there has not been much research exploring *Best practices* and innovative learning models that have proven effective in overcoming moral decadence in the digital era through optimizing the role of Islamic Religious Education (Hafidzah & Al-bahri, 2025). This research seeks to fill these gaps by integrating multidimensional analysis that includes the identification of challenges, evaluation of existing learning practices, and the formulation of concrete solutions that are applicable in the context of contemporary Indonesian education.

Novelty or *novelty* This research lies in several fundamental aspects. First, this research presents an integrative conceptual framework that connects Islamic education theory, adolescent developmental psychology, and digital media studies in one holistic paradigm to understand the phenomenon of moral decadence in the digital era. Second, this study explores the learning model of Islamic Religious Education based on digital literacy and a contextual approach that is responsive to the actual challenges faced by students in their digital lives. Third, this research is not only descriptive-analytical but also prescriptive by offering practical solutions that can be implemented by educators in designing effective learning strategies. Fourth, this research uses a balanced perspective between the preservation of traditional moral values and adaptation to the dynamics of technological development, so as to produce a synthesis that is relevant to the contemporary context without neglecting the essence of Islamic teachings (Alam et al., 2025).

Based on the background and identification of the research gaps that have been described, the formulation of the problems in this study is as follows: first, what are the characteristics and forms of moral decadence that occur among students in the context of the digital age and what factors contribute to this phenomenon; second, what are the challenges faced in learning Islamic Religious Education to overcome moral decadence among students in the digital age; third, how effective Islamic Religious Education learning strategies and solutions are in shaping the character of students who have noble character and moral resilience in the digital era. The three problem formulations are systematically designed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the

problems being researched and formulate alternative solutions that are applicable and based on strong theoretical foundations and relevant empirical reality.

In line with the formulation of the problem that has been determined, the purpose of this research is to analyze in depth the characteristics and factors that cause moral decadence among students in the digital era, identify various challenges faced in the implementation of Islamic Religious Education learning as a preventive and curative effort against moral degradation, and formulate innovative Islamic Religious Education learning strategies and solutions. effective, and applicable in shaping the character of students who have high moral integrity and are able to use digital technology wisely and responsibly in accordance with the values of Islamic teachings. This research is expected to make a theoretical and practical contribution to the scientific development of Islamic education and its implementation in the field.

The benefits of this research can be classified into theoretical and practical benefits. Theoretically, this research is expected to enrich the scientific treasures in the field of Islamic education, especially related to learning strategies that are responsive to the dynamics of technological developments and social change. This research is also expected to be an academic reference for future studies that examine similar phenomena in more diverse contexts. Practically, this research provides benefits for various parties. For educators, this research provides guidelines and learning strategies that can be adopted to increase the effectiveness of character education through Islamic Religious Education. For educational institutions, this research can be the basis for formulating policies and programs that support the strengthening of moral education in the digital era. For students, this research will indirectly have a positive impact through improving the quality of learning that is more relevant to their lives. For the wider community, this research contributes to collective efforts in shaping a generation that is not only intellectually intelligent but also has solid moral and spiritual maturity in facing the challenges of the times.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach with the *Library Research* or literature research that focuses on the collection, analysis, and interpretation of textual data from various literature sources relevant to the topic of moral decadence among students in the digital age and Islamic Religious Education learning. This type of research is classified as descriptive-analytical research that aims to describe phenomena in depth as well as analyze causal relationships and solutions to the problems being studied. This literature research relies on secondary data sources derived from textbooks, articles of national and international accredited scientific journals, research reports, seminar proceedings, and other academic publications that have gone through the process *Peer Review* to guarantee the quality and validity of the information used. The data collection technique is carried out through documentation by identifying, classifying, and reviewing literature that has correlation with the formulation of the research problem, especially literature published in the last five years to ensure the actuality and relevance of the data to the latest developments (Sari, 2020).

Data analysis in this study uses *the content analysis* method with a descriptive-analytical approach that involves the process of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawn. The analysis stage begins by identifying the main themes that emerge from various literature, comparing perspectives and findings from different sources, synthesizing information to build coherent arguments, and formulating conclusions and recommendations based on the results of a comprehensive analysis. The validity of the research is ensured through triangulation of sources using various literature from diverse authors and perspectives, as well as *cross-checking* information to ensure the consistency and credibility of the research findings. The literature search keywords used in this study include: moral decadence, moral degradation, Islamic Religious Education, PAI learning, digital era students, *digital natives*, digital literacy, *cyberbullying*, and social media.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
Characteristics and Factors of Moral Decadence Among Students in the Digital Era

The moral decadence that occurs among students in the digital era shows very complex and multidimensional characteristics, in contrast to the phenomenon of moral degradation in previous times. The main characteristics identified include behavioral changes influenced by the intensity of use of digital technology, especially in play activities *Online Games* which has an impact on the emergence of laziness, disobedience to parents, selfish behavior, temperamental, and dishonesty that are increasingly worrying. Research shows that excessive use of digital devices has changed students' social interaction patterns, where they are more comfortable communicating through social media than interacting in person, which in turn weakens their empathy and social sensitivity skills (Safirah et al., 2025). This phenomenon is further exacerbated by the easy access to negative content that is not in accordance with moral and religious values, such as pornography, violence, *Cyberbullying*, as well as misleading information that can damage the character and personality of students (Mokhtar & Lubis, 2024).

The factors that contribute to the occurrence of moral decadence among students in the digital era can be categorized into internal and external factors that interact with each other in a complex way. Internal factors include a weak understanding of religious and moral values, low self-control and emotions, and a lack of spiritual

awareness that is the foundation in facing the temptations of the digital world. The dominant external factor is the development of science and technology that has a double impact, where the ease of access to information is not balanced with the moral and mental maturity of students in filtering the content consumed. The consumerist, hedonistic, and secularistic attitudes that are the embryos of moral decadence are further strengthened when digital technology makes it easier to fulfill these desires without limits and adequate supervision (Mahmudi, 2023). This condition is exacerbated by the lack of parental role in accompanying and supervising their children's digital activities, as well as the weak synergy between families, schools, and society in building an effective moral education ecosystem (Illinois, 2024).

The concrete manifestation of moral decadence in the digital era can be seen from the increasing cases of behavioral deviance among students which include various forms such as violence in the educational environment, *Bullying* Both physically and cyberly, brawls between students, sexual harassment, promiscuity, and abuse of narcotics and liquor reflect the nation's moral crisis. Phenomenon *Social Media Anxiety* Or excessive anxiety due to the use of social media is also a new indicator of the negative impact of digitalization on students' mental and moral health. Data shows that students who spend more than six hours per day in digital activities are more likely to exhibit antisocial behaviors, lack of empathy, and difficulty in building healthy interpersonal relationships. Extreme cases even show that there are fatalities due to violence triggered by conflicts in the virtual world which are then carried over to the real world, indicating that the dividing line between virtual and actual reality is increasingly blurred in students' perceptions (Morals & Islam, 2025).

Learning Challenges of Islamic Religious Education in Overcoming Moral Decadence

Islamic Religious Education learning in the digital era faces very complex and multifaceted challenges that hinder its effectiveness in shaping students' moral character. The first and most fundamental challenge is the gap between the curriculum used and the reality of students' digital lives, where learning materials are still conventional and not fully adaptive to the dynamics of technological developments and generational behavioral changes *Digital Native*. The existing curriculum often only emphasizes the cognitive aspect in the form of theoretical knowledge of Islamic teachings without providing practical guidance on how to implement these values in the context of a digital life full of temptations and moral challenges. In addition, the teacher-centered and lecture-oriented learning method is not able to attract the interest of students who are used to interactive, visual, and dynamic digital stimulus (Mahmudi, 2023).

The second challenge is related to the quality of human resources, especially the competence of educators in integrating digital technology in Islamic Religious Education learning while providing an understanding of digital ethics and critical media literacy. Most Islamic Religious Education teachers still have difficulty in operating digital learning platforms, designing engaging educational content, and utilizing social media as an effective means of da'wah and moral education. The lack of continuous training and coaching for educators in facing the challenges of the digital era has caused a widening competency gap between teachers and students in terms of technology mastery (Mokhtar & Lubis, 2024). This condition is exacerbated by the limitations of digital infrastructure in many Islamic educational institutions, such as the lack of adequate internet facilities, the lack of technological devices to support learning, and limited access to quality digital learning platforms.

The third challenge is the lack of support and synergy from various parties who should be involved in students' moral education, especially parents and the community who have not fully understood the urgency of mentoring in their children's digital activities. Many parents give their children complete freedom in using *Gadgets* without clear supervision and restrictions, so students can access a wide range of negative content without adequate filters and controls. The lack of communication and collaboration between schools and parents in building an understanding of moral education in the digital age leads to inconsistencies in the grades that students receive at school and at home (Safirah et al., 2025). In addition, the increasingly permissive community environment towards deviant behavior and the weakening of the role of religious leaders and religious communities in providing moral guidance to the younger generation also weakens the effectiveness of religious education in schools.

Islamic Religious Education Learning Strategies and Solutions in Shaping the Character of Students with Noble Character

Effective Islamic Religious Education learning strategies in facing the challenges of moral decadence in the digital era must be holistic, integrative, and adaptive to technological developments. The first strategy is digital transformation in Islamic Religious Education learning which is not only limited to the use of technology as a learning medium, but rather the digitization of Islamic values themselves so that they can be accessed, understood, and practiced by students in their digital lives. Implementation of religious education based *Tafsir Tarbawi* that integrates a deep understanding of the Qur'an and Hadith with the context of contemporary life has proven effective in internalizing moral values in the younger generation, especially through the role of educators as role models, the use of interactive and interesting educational digital media, and the strengthening of social values through a solid religious community. This approach includes the development of a learning application

based on *Mobile*, the use of social media for educational da'wah, the creation of creative learning video content, and the use of *Gamification* to make religious learning more fun and relevant to the characteristics of students in the digital age (Illinois, 2024).

The second strategy is to strengthen critical digital literacy based on Islamic values, where students are not only taught how to use technology but also how to sort information, evaluate content, and use digital media ethically and responsibly in accordance with religious teachings. Islamic Religious Education learning must integrate material on the ethics of communicating on social media, the dangers of negative content, the importance of maintaining data privacy and security, and how to be a *Netizens* who have noble character by not spreading hoaxes, hate speech, or content that violates religious and social norms. Contextual approaches that connect Islamic teachings with the actual problems students face in their digital lives have proven to be more effective in shaping moral awareness than abstract and theoretical learning (Safirah et al., 2025). In addition, the use of non-digital learning media in a balanced proportion is also important to increase the concentration, discipline, and awareness of worship of students who are often disturbed by digital distractions.

The third strategy is the development of a synergistic moral education ecosystem through close collaboration between schools, families, communities, and the government in creating an environment conducive to the formation of students' character. Schools need to develop a curriculum that is more flexible and responsive to the times while adhering to the fundamental values of Islam, as well as providing continuous training programs for teachers to have adequate digital competencies. Families as the main educators must be empowered through parents' digital literacy programs to be able to accompany and supervise children's digital activities wisely, including setting rules for the use of *gadgets*, discussing the content consumed, and being role models in the healthy use of technology. The community and religious community need to reactivate their role in providing moral guidance through recitation, mentoring, and character building programs that actively involve the young generation.

A comprehensive solution that can be implemented includes a total revitalization of the Islamic Religious Education strategy by adopting a more innovative, participatory, and based approach on the actual needs of students in the digital age. The development of interactive and integrated digital learning platforms, the creation of quality and engaging educational content, intensive training for educators in digital pedagogics and media literacy, and the provision of adequate technological infrastructure in all Islamic educational institutions are strategic steps that must be realized immediately. The combination of a traditional approach that emphasizes spiritual and moral development with the integration of modern technology has proven to be very effective in facing the challenges of the digital age, where students not only have strong religious knowledge but also skills in navigating the digital world wisely. Strengthening the role of educators as *Role Model* which not only teaches moral values verbally but also demonstrates them in real behavior, including in the use of social media and digital technology, is a key factor in the successful internalization of Islamic values in students (Illinois, 2024).

The implementation of these solutions requires a strong commitment from all parties as well as adequate policy support from the government in the form of adequate budget allocation for the development of digital education infrastructure, teacher training programs, and the development of quality educational content. Continuous evaluation and monitoring of the effectiveness of the strategies implemented is also very important to ensure that religious education is truly able to stem moral decadence and form a generation that is not only intellectually intelligent but also has strong spiritual and moral maturity. Thus, Islamic Religious Education can take back its strategic role as the nation's moral fortress in the midst of the inevitable rapid flow of digitalization (Nola, 2025).

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Moral decadence among students in the digital era is a complex phenomenon triggered by the interaction between internal factors in the form of weak spiritual foundations and understanding of religious values and external factors in the form of easy access to technology without adequate supervision and guidance. Manifestations of moral degradation include various forms of deviant behavior such as addiction to *online games*, *cyberbullying*, consumption of pornographic content, and weakened social politeness. Islamic Religious Education learning faces significant challenges including curriculum gaps with digital reality, low digital competence of educators, limited technological infrastructure, and lack of synergy between schools, families, and communities. An effective strategy in tackling moral decadence requires a holistic approach that integrates the digital transformation of *tafsir tarbawi* learning, strengthening critical digital literacy, improving educator competence, and building a moral education ecosystem that involves close collaboration between all stakeholders to form a generation that has high moral integrity and strong spiritual resilience in the digital era.

ADVICE

1. Educational institutions need to immediately revitalize the Islamic Religious Education curriculum so that it is more adaptive to the challenges of the digital era by integrating digital literacy materials and social media ethics.

2. The government should provide continuous training programs for educators to improve digital and pedagogic competence in technology-based religious learning.

3. Schools need to develop interactive digital learning platforms and provide adequate technological infrastructure to support learning transformation.

4. Parents must be empowered through digital literacy programs to be able to accompany and supervise children's digital activities wisely.

5. Further research is needed to explore innovative models of Islamic Religious Education learning that have proven effective in more diverse contexts.

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