

STRENGTHENING THE IDEOLOGY OF ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN THE ERA OF TECHNOLOGICAL DISRUPTION

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the ideological strengthening of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) in the era of technological disruption within Madrasah Aliyah Negeri (MAN) in Medan City. Amidst rapid digital transformation and the growing influence of globalized information, educational institutions face new challenges in preserving and transmitting religious values to students. Using a qualitative method and a case study approach, this research explores how teachers adapt pedagogical strategies to maintain the relevance of IRE in a digital age. Data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis. The findings reveal that teachers utilize several key strategies to reinforce Islamic ideology, including the clear and contextual delivery of curriculum content, sufficient instructional time, and utilization of available facilities and teaching staff. Furthermore, emphasis is placed on developing students' critical thinking and reasoning abilities, nurturing civic awareness, promoting tolerance and appreciation for diversity, and aligning learning with students' interests and talents. These strategies aim to balance religious values with the demands of 21st-century competencies. A novelty contribution of this study is its focus on the intersection between religious education and digital disruption, an area that remains underexplored in existing literature. Additionally, the research highlights structural challenges such as the absence of computer laboratories in several MAN institutions in Medan, which hampers equitable access to digital resources and creates information gaps among students and teachers. The study recommends future research employing mixed methods with broader samples across different regions to provide a more comprehensive understanding of IRE adaptation in the digital era.

Keywords: Islamic Religious Education, Madrasah Aliyah, Strengthening Ideology



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INTRODUCTION

The accelerating pace of technological development in the 21st century has brought transformative changes to all aspects of human life, including education. In this era of rapid digital

innovation, the educational landscape is facing unprecedented challenges particularly in sustaining and strengthening ideological foundations such as those rooted in Islamic Religious Education (IRE) (Cheek, 2018; Komariah & Nihayah, 2023; Guna & Yuwantina, 2024). Today's learners are immersed in a complex and dynamic information ecosystem that presents both opportunities for intellectual advancement and risks of ideological dilution. The digital environment, while rich with information, also enables the spread of narratives that may conflict with traditional Islamic values and teachings.

Islamic Religious Education, with its diverse and value-laden content, is expected to serve as a fundamental pillar in shaping students' character, spirituality, and moral compass. However, to remain relevant in the digital era, IRE must evolve in its delivery while maintaining the integrity of its ideological principles. Technological advancements have led to the rise of online religious lectures, mobile applications offering Islamic content, and digital platforms for learning (Nasr, 2020; Saada, & Magadlah, 2021; Komalasari & Yakubu, 2023; Wiliyanti, Rakhmadi, & Octavia, 2023; Habibi, Jiyane, & Özşen, 2024). Despite the benefits of increased accessibility, this convenience is often not accompanied by critical reinforcement of religious ideology, which can result in students passively consuming content that lacks a solid doctrinal foundation.

This issue is particularly visible in institutions like Madrasah Aliyah Negeri (MAN) in Medan City religious-based formal education institutions tasked with producing graduates who excel spiritually, morally, and academically. MANs, which operate under the framework of the national curriculum, are facing a dual challenge: embracing technological progress while safeguarding the core ideological essence of Islamic education. In a context where students are digital natives, there is an urgent need to rethink how IRE ideology is cultivated amidst the waves of digital information (Taufik, 2020; Zubairi, & Nurdin, 2022; Kolb, 2023; Rachmanto & Akande, 2024; Saputra, Musonda, & Nikolantonakis, 2024).

Previous studies have highlighted various strategies for strengthening ideology in the digital age. For instance, Adhayanto et al., (2021) emphasized the importance of digital literacy and the involvement of youth as ideological digital influencers. They suggest that strengthening fundamental values through ideological-themed content is essential in countering ideological erosion. Muharir (2022) added that ideological strength is not solely determined by doctrinal soundness, but by the active role of individuals who uphold and fight for its relevance in contemporary society. Similarly, Ardhana et al. (2023) examined how the Islamic community in Bali promotes religious moderation and tolerance by adapting local wisdom demonstrating that religious ideology can coexist and thrive within multicultural and digital settings.

Although these studies offer valuable insights, there are several gaps that this study seeks to address. First, existing research has largely focused on the role of digital influencers, ideological literacy, or community-level transformation, with less attention given to how formal educational institutions, particularly madrasahs, develop systematic strategies for ideological strengthening in the face of technological disruption. Second, there is a lack of theoretical models that specifically integrate Islamic ideology with digital pedagogy within the context of secondary education. Third, current literature often overlooks the effectiveness of these strategies in real educational settings, such as how well they resonate with students, how they influence behavior, and how they sustain Islamic identity in the long term.

This research aims to formulate a strategic model for strengthening the ideology of Islamic religious education that aligns with the demands of digital transformation. It seeks to explore how ideological principles can be effectively reinforced in madrasahs while embracing technological advancements as tools for dissemination, engagement, and internalization of Islamic values. The outcomes of this study are expected to contribute to the development of innovative pedagogical frameworks that preserve ideological integrity in the face of constant technological change. The specific objectives of this study are: 1) To analyze the influence of technological disruption on the ideological foundation of Islamic religious education; 2) To identify the strategies adopted by MAN Medan City in integrating technology for the purpose of strengthening Islamic religious ideology; 3) To evaluate the effectiveness of these strategies in equipping students to maintain their Islamic identity and values in a digitally connected world. Ultimately, this study will provide practical and theoretical contributions toward building resilient Islamic educational systems that not only keep pace with digital transformation but also actively guide learners in developing strong, value-driven identities amid technological disruption.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach with a case study design, particularly suited to exploring complex social phenomena in depth by examining specific cases in their real-world context (Maulana, 2022). The case study approach allows for a flexible application of theoretical frameworks, enabling the modification, development, reinforcement, or rejection of theories based on the research findings.

This study explores the strengthening of Islamic education ideology through the case study of three Aqidah Akhlak teachers from three Madrasah Aliyah Negeri (MAN) in Medan City. The selection of these teachers was conducted using a purposive sampling technique based on the following inclusion criteria: 1) A minimum of seven years of teaching experience to ensure sufficient professional expertise; 2) A proven track record in teaching Aqidah, Akhlak subjects is demonstrated through participation in teacher training programs or recognition of teaching performance; 3) Consent and willingness to participate in the study.

The research was conducted over one month, from October 14, 2024, to November 14, 2024. This timeframe was sufficient to gather in-depth data through multiple participant interactions. Data were collected using multiple qualitative methods to ensure triangulation and enhance the validity and reliability of the findings: 1) In-depth interviews: Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the three teachers to explore their perspectives, teaching practices, and experiences related to Islamic education ideology. Each interview lasted approximately 60–90 minutes and was audio-recorded with participants’ consent; 2) Document analysis: Relevant documents, such as teaching plans (RPP), syllabi, and instructional materials, were analyzed to understand the integration of Islamic education ideology into the curriculum; 3) Classroom observations: Non-participatory observations were conducted in the teachers’ classrooms to capture real-time teaching practices and student interactions.

The data were analyzed manually using thematic analysis based on the six pragmatic steps proposed by Aronson (1995): 1) Data Collection: Primary data were gathered through interviews, observations, and document analysis; 2) Data Transcription: Interview recordings were transcribed verbatim, and findings from classroom observations and document analysis were systematically documented; 3) Theme Identification: Main themes were identified by repeatedly reading the transcripts to uncover patterns and categorize the data; 4) Theme Management: Themes were filtered, grouped, and refined to focus on the most relevant issues aligned with the research objectives; 5) Argument Construction: Categorized data were synthesized into coherent arguments to support the study's findings; 6) Findings Application: Practical implications of the findings were developed and connected to the context of Islamic education.

Ethical approval for this study was obtained from the relevant institutional review board (IRB). The following ethical protocols were adhered to: 1) Informed consent: All participants were provided detailed information about the study's objectives, methods, and confidentiality measures. Written consent was obtained before data collection; 2) Confidentiality: Participants' identities were anonymized, and pseudonyms were used in all reports and publications. Voluntary participation: Participants were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences.

The informants for this study were three teachers, each representing a different MAN in Medan City. Their profiles are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Partcipan Profil

No	Initial Name	Age	Teaching Time
1	SSD	43	7.5 years
2	MFN	45	8.1 years
3	IL	46	7.9 years

Validity and Reliability, To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, the following strategies were employed: 1) Triangulation: Data from interviews, observations, and document analysis were cross-verified to enhance validity; 2) Member-Checking: Preliminary findings were shared with participants to confirm the accuracy of interpretations; 3) Peer Debriefing: Discussions with peers and qualitative research experts were conducted to validate the analysis process and findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Integration of Religious Knowledge with Social Context (Teacher A1)

Based on the results of interviews and observations with A1 teachers who are also teachers of MAN B1 Medan City, it was found that in terms of strengthening the ideology of Islamic religious education, clarity of implementation steps outside the school situation is needed as revealed by the informant as follows:

Informant SSD: I think it is very important for students to integrate their religious knowledge with the social context in which they live. For example, about the rampant phenomenon of online games among the younger generation, students are equipped with this knowledge so that they can become pioneers to help the young generation in their place of residence not to be trapped in the addiction of playing online games.

In addition to the clarity of implementation steps outside of school, according to him, strengthening the ideology of Islamic religious education also needs to pay attention to the availability of adequate time, facilities, and manpower. Several State Aliyah Madrasah (MAN) in Medan City already have facilities and qualified human resources for mastering technology. However, in some State Aliyah Madrasah (MAN), outside big cities, there are still limited. According to him, strengthening ideology cannot be limited to delivering lectures in front of students because it may be that the access to information and technological devices owned by students is more sophisticated than that of teachers and schools. Still, because students are not equipped with a good understanding of the use of technology, many of them are trapped with addiction to online games and even online gambling.

Data Validation: The findings were verified through triangulation with observations of facilities at MAN B1 and additional interviews that showed significant differences in resource access between urban and suburban schools. In addition, the interview results were confirmed through member-checking with informants to ensure the findings were interpreted by their intentions.

Developing Critical and Philosophical Thinking Skills (Teacher A2)

Furthermore, based on the results of an interview with an A2 teacher who is also a teacher from MAN B2 Medan City, it was found that in terms of strengthening the ideology of Islamic religious education in the era of technological disruption, according to him, what is important to do is the need to develop thinking and reasoning skills as expressed by the informant as follows:

Informant MFN: Muslims love studying philosophy because that is where knowledge comes from. If Muslims already love studying philosophy, they will be open to all sciences. Today, students generally think that teachers in religious studies have no right to talk about technology because they think there are already teachers who focus on this field. However, because technological advances are also feared to disrupt human morals, inevitably, all scientific disciplines must see this as something serious and try to provide balance.

Then, the thing that should be considered in terms of strengthening the ideology of Islamic religious education is the important aspect of understanding that every human being lives not only for himself but also to be a good member of society. The content of Islamic religious education lessons serves as a means to help students understand their identity both as individuals and as members of society. Today, most students live their lives alienated from other groups of humans. The influence of smartphones has caused most humans to experience a decline in social interaction. According to teacher A2, this is the duty of all teachers and not just Islamic teachers. If all teachers intervene, it is easy for a school to give the best to its students.

Data Validation: This perspective was strengthened through triangulation with observations at MAN B2 that showed similar patterns peer debriefing that identified the importance of cross-disciplinary roles in strengthening students' social awareness. Member-checking was also conducted with teacher A2 to ensure the accuracy of data interpretation.

Technological Adaptation and Utilization of Student Potential (Teacher A3)

Based on the results of subsequent interviews with A3 teachers who are also teachers from MAN B3 Medan City, it was found that related to strengthening the ideology of Islamic religious education in the era of technological disruption; it is necessary to be open to new experiences and respect existing differences, as expressed by the informant as follows:

Informant IL: In my opinion, if Islamic religious education teachers in various Aliyah Madrasahs, both public and private, do not keep up with technological developments, then these teachers will have difficulties in educating their students. Teachers must be adaptive to the development of the times because only with such an attitude can they dive into the world of students and help direct them to sort out what is good and what is not good to follow.

Furthermore, according to the A3 teacher, the consideration relates to the teacher's attention to the student's interest. It is impossible for students who sit in Madrasah Aliyah to have extraordinary potential in terms of mastery of technology. Suppose teachers or schools find potential like this. In that case, the student deserves full attention so that the competencies possessed by students can continue to develop and are directed to continue to uphold the values of Islamic teachings. For example, schools can create projects with students with talents in terms of mastery of technology to make learning media more interesting. In general, teachers at Madrasah Aliyah are not updated on using modern learning media, so if they find talented students in terms of mastering technology, they should be invited to work together to help schools improve the required learning media. Data Validation: This finding is supported by observations at MAN B3, where the school has not optimally cooperated with several students with high technological talents. Triangulation of data with interviews with other teachers also emphasized the importance of collaboration between teachers and students to improve learning media. Member-checking was conducted to validate that the interpretations of teacher A3 were in accordance with their original views.

Based on the results of the above interview, the researcher found that what has been done by teacher representatives from several MAN in Medan City is the same as the theoretical framework put forward by (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2018) that there are several strategies to strengthen ideology in the curriculum, including; First, clarity of steps; Second, the availability of time, facilities and human resources; Third, student optimization in learning; Fourth, the development of thinking and reasoning skills; Fifth, self-understanding as an individual and a member of society; Sixth, open yourself to new experiences and accept differences; Seventh, encouraging students to learn; Eighth, serving the needs of students; Ninth, expanding students' interests; Ninth, the development of cognitive, affective, psychomotor, and social aspects. Discourses on technology, information, and communication development intersect with certain religious beliefs. For example, the case of Rushdie, who wrote Satanic verses, has violently sparked the anger of Muslims from all over the world. Rushdie uses technology through communication media to launch propaganda (Kyalo, 2024). Although Ruhdie has apologized, he is still living in exile. Often, mass communication is used by a certain group of people or religions to spread its influence to others. However, other phenomena have emerged as they have occurred in Europe and America. Although most religions have full access to technology, information, and communication, the reality is that the religions that grow and develop the fastest are not the majority religions but the traditional ones in the third world (Alexander, 2013, 2020).

Strengthening the ideology of Islamic religious education can also be done by implementing a project-based learning model (Sapir, 2024). The challenges of Islamic religious education in general are sourced from elderly human resources, the learning model used is very conventional, the lack of facilities and infrastructure owned by teachers and schools, and the lack of human resources. The project-based learning model can increase students' motivation in conducting problem-solving analysis and critical and meaningful thinking, allowing them to learn independently, improve their prior knowledge, and learn about natural life situations according to their reality (Antonsen & Lundestad, 2019; Stewart, 2014).

The strengthening of religious education ideology is also indirectly influenced by the educational background of religious teachers who teach in the classroom. As expressed by (Alanoglu et al., 2022), teachers' educational backgrounds have direct and indirect effects on digital literacy skills to face change challenges. In the face of the rapidly evolving tide of technological change, teachers are expected to be able to develop their digital skills and those of their students. Digital literacy is important today because its influence has permeated all aspects of human life (Bergunder, 2014; Blondheim & Rosenberg, 2016; Yohanie et al., 2024).

The next research is related to whether technology can affect an individual's understanding of their religious beliefs as disclosed (McClure, 2017) that the Internet as a pluralistic force has created a new space where its users have to navigate the ever-competing truths and ideas that are considered important to defend. Because the internet has created a variety of worldviews, beliefs, and religious

ideas, so that its users reject the exclusive truth of a certain religious tradition. But at the same time, when internet users no longer accept one-sided truth claims, facts on the ground also prove that they do not affect the enthusiasm of individuals to believe in the religion they follow. Indirectly, an individual's religious experience through online activities can fill the gap that he does not get when learning religion through people he has believed in so far (Eisenstein, 2011; Casanova, 2019).

Further research on technological developments and their influence on the strengthening of ideology can be seen based on several views, including First, religious hierarchy; Second, religious structure; Third, religious ideology; and Fourth, religious texts (Tsai, 2015). Religious hierarchy is closely related to the role of religious leaders such as Imams, Rabbis, Pastors, and other mentions to influence their religious adherents in getting around the accelerating technological changes. Regarding religious structures, it was found that some religious adherents valued online communities more than official religious organizations. Then, some religions are not allowed to interpret their religious teachings without the approval of the official religious authority. Still, there is also a religious entity that allows its adherents to interpret their religious understanding without the need for the approval of the religious authority (Gillin, 2015; Han, 2015).

The next discourse is related to strengthening religious ideology in the era of disruption, as proposed by (Drees, 2009), that all religious believers, especially religious leaders, should respond quickly to technological developments that have a direct impact on the lives of mankind. A real example is the impact of technology that can cause ecological disasters; it does not seem to receive serious attention from religious leaders. Even if there is an impression that it is only lip service without putting serious pressure on technology developers who have caused an ecological disaster, strengthening religious ideology cannot be done only by maintaining an established ideology. Still, it is necessary to re-question whether the established ideology contributes to the development of human will. If religious leaders only go around in circles on religious dogmas that aim to bewitch their adherents to sleep soundly in their religious beliefs and completely surrender ecological disasters to God, then which God wants to be ruled like that by ordinary people even though in the world ordinary humans get the nickname of religious leaders.

Strengthening the ideology of Islamic religious education in the face of the era of technological disruption, like it or not, inevitably will continue to face complicated and quite challenging challenges. The various strategies that several teachers of Madrasah Aliyah Negeri have carried out in Medan City in strengthening the ideology of Islamic religious education cannot be underestimated because what teachers do is sometimes completely purely their search from the various readings they have. It would be good if all teachers under the auspices of the Ministry of Religion were equipped with qualified training competencies to face the onslaught of technological developments well without losing the purity values of Islamic teachings themselves. Researchers found that in the city of Medan, there are still Madrasah Aliyah Negeri that do not have a computer laboratory, and indirectly, it can be concluded that teachers and students at Madrasah Aliyah Negeri are very vulnerable to being exposed to the flow of confusing information. Serious work is needed by the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the North Sumatra Region so that there should be no more Madrasah Aliyah Negeri that does not have a Computer Laboratory.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that several State Madrasah Aliyah (MAN) institutions in Medan City through the efforts of moral aqidah subject teachers—have taken significant and proactive steps to strengthen the ideological foundation of Islamic religious education amid the challenges of technological disruption. These efforts reflect a strong commitment to maintaining the relevance of religious education in a rapidly changing socio-technological landscape. The strategies identified include: (1) the formulation of clear and structured curricular steps to embed Islamic ideological values; (2) an emphasis on the need for adequate resources, including time, infrastructure, and human capital, to support implementation; (3) consistent efforts by teachers to cultivate students' critical thinking and reasoning abilities, which are essential for navigating complex moral and ethical issues in modern life; (4) the reinforcement of the understanding that human life should contribute meaningfully to society, not merely serve personal interests; (5) the cultivation of openness and tolerance by encouraging appreciation of diversity and difference; and (6) attention to individual students' skills and interests, allowing for more personalized and meaningful learning experiences. These findings underscore the adaptive capacity of teachers in religious education to

respond to the shifting needs of students in the digital era. The role of the teacher goes beyond knowledge transmission; it involves being a moral guide and facilitator who fosters spiritual resilience, social responsibility, and intellectual openness in learners. However, the research also acknowledges certain limitations, particularly in the narrow scope of data collection, as it relied on input from a limited number of informants. To deepen the understanding of how Islamic religious education is evolving in response to technological disruption, future studies should employ broader and more diverse qualitative methods such as ethnographic studies, focus group discussions, or multi-site case studies and involve a wider range of participants, including students, parents, and all subject teachers across various MAN institutions. The implications of this study point to the urgent need for institutional support in equipping religious educators with the tools and professional development opportunities necessary to thrive in a digital age. Strengthening collaboration among educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers will be key to ensuring that Islamic education not only retains its ideological foundation but also remains relevant and transformative for future generations. This research contributes to a growing discourse on integrating traditional values with contemporary pedagogical practices in Islamic education, highlighting the importance of adaptability, inclusivity, and context-sensitive strategies.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

The first author was responsible for conceptualization, methodology, formal analysis, and writing (original draft preparation). The second author conducted a formal analysis, prepared resources, and handled visualization. The third author was responsible for validation, writing (review and editing), and supervision. The fourth and fifth authors were involved in validation and formal analysis.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The author(s) declare no conflict of interest.

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