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# QURANIC LITERACY CULTURE AS A STRATEGY FOR STRENGTHENING STUDENTS' RELIGIOUS IDENTITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION DURING DIGITAL DISRUPTION

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## ABSTRACT

**Objective:** This study aims to analyze the role of Al-Qur'an literacy culture in strengthening students' religious identity amid technological disruption, while formulating a model for developing Al-Qur'an literacy that is relevant to the needs of the digital age.

**Research Design & Methods:** This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach and a systematic literature review based on the PRISMA protocol, analyzing 13 articles published between 2019 and 2024 to ensure rigorous selection, screening, and synthesis of relevant academic sources.

**Findings:** This study finds that digitization and technological disruption have a dual impact on students' religious identity—creating challenges such as fragmented attention, conflicting values, weakened traditional authority, and performative religiosity, while also offering opportunities through wider access to spiritual knowledge, virtual religious communities, personalized learning, and digital da'wah innovations. The study proposes a five-level Al-Qur'an literacy ecosystem—spanning institutional policy, curriculum, infrastructure, guidance, and campus culture—that frames Qur'anic literacy as a multidimensional competency and introduces the concept of mixed religiosity, blending online and offline religious practices.

**Implications & Recommendations:** These findings indicate the need for universities to develop an integrated Al-Qur'an literacy ecosystem and facilitate religious practices that are adaptive to the digital context. Recommendations include strengthening policies, updating curricula, optimizing technology, and developing a campus culture that supports student literacy and religious diversity.

**Contribution & Value Added:** This study contributes theoretically by proposing an integrated analytical model of Qur'anic literacy that combines multidimensional literacy, hybrid religiosity, religious identity, and technology perspectives.

**Keywords:** Qur'anic Literacy; Religious Identity; Technological Disruption

JEL codes: Z12; I23; O33

**Article type:** research paper

## INTRODUCTION

The era of the 4.0 industrial revolution and society 5.0 has brought fundamental changes to almost all aspects of human life, including the religious dimension of the younger generation. Digital technology disruption, marked by the penetration of the internet, social media, and artificial intelligence, has changed the way students interact, communicate, and build their identities. In this

context, globalization and the development of information technology present both opportunities and significant challenges to the steadfastness of students' religious identities. While access to such a wide range of information enriches knowledge, it can also erode the cultural and spiritual values that underpin faith (Arif et al., 2024). To respond to these challenges, strengthening the culture of Qur'anic literacy is crucial to building religious awareness that is adaptive to changing times. By combining Islamic values with technological innovation, Islamic education can maintain the relevance of its spiritual teachings while shaping a young generation that is religious, critical, and digitally savvy in the modern era (Musyafak & Subhi, 2023).

Religious identity is a key element in shaping a person's character, morality, and outlook on life, especially for Muslim students as they discover their identity and integrate religious values with modern realities (Azmi & Khoeri, 2025). This identity cannot be understood merely as a symbolic expression or as routine worship, but rather as a process of internalizing the values of the Qur'an that guide behavior, thinking, and decision-making in daily life. In this context, strengthening the culture of Qur'anic literacy is crucial for fostering a deep understanding of contextual Islamic teachings and for applying Qur'anic values to navigate the complexities of the digital world (Maidugu & Isah, 2024). Qur'anic literacy in the modern era does not focus solely on the ability to read and interpret sacred texts, but also requires reflective and critical skills so that students can relate Islamic ethical and spiritual principles to the dynamics of global life. With the support of digital learning technology, the Qur'an learning process can be packaged interactively and adaptively, enabling students to strengthen their moral and spiritual foundations while honing digital skills relevant to the demands of the times (Arif et al., 2024).

Various signs indicate that strengthening students' Quranic literacy is becoming increasingly urgent. First, although access to religious content through digital platforms continues to rise, the intensity of students' direct interaction with the holy text of the Quran through reading, reflection, or in-depth study has declined. Second, the emergence of radicalism and extremism on campus reflects that understanding of the Qur'an has not been developed in context, meaning the text is read without adequate contextual, historical, or *maqāṣid* understanding, making it easy to use as a tool for ideological narratives. Third, many students experience a crisis of religious identity due to a lack of deep engagement with the holy text, which should be a source of spiritual reflection, moral identity, and a framework of meaning, so that religious enlightenment tends to be superficial, pragmatic, or swept away by the dynamics of digital society (Ichwan et al., 2024; Usman et al., 2023).

Thus, the implementation of the Al-Qur'an literacy strategy not only serves to improve understanding of the holy text but also to build cultural and spiritual resilience amid the tide of technological disruption. Through literacy rooted in Qur'anic values, students can build religious resilience, enabling them to face the challenges of the digital age without losing their Islamic identity and the moral principles that guide their lives (Taufik, 2020). The integration of Qur'anic learning with digital technology is a strategic step toward shaping a generation of Muslims who are adaptive, critical, and strong in character amid rapid global change (Fakhrurrazi et al., 2023). Therefore, this study aims to examine in depth how Qur'an literacy strategies can be implemented as instruments for strengthening students' religious identity in an era of technological disruption, and to identify effective approaches that can harmonize spiritual values with modern technological developments.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### The Concept of Quranic Literacy

Quran literacy encompasses not only the ability to read the holy text of the Quran fluently, but also to understand its meaning, interpret the historical and social context in which the revelation was revealed, and apply the moral and ethical values of Islamic teachings in daily life. Al-Qur'an literacy is not merely a technical skill of reading Arabic letters or memorizing recitations, but also a gateway to the development of reflective understanding of the messages of the Qur'an, character transformation, and the implementation of Islamic values (morals, honesty, responsibility) in social interactions, the environment, and one's spiritual journey (Mulyani et al., 2018). The concept of Qur'anic literacy encompasses not only the ability to read the text correctly

but also the understanding, appreciation, and implementation of Qur'anic values in daily life. In the context of Islamic education, memorizing the Qur'an is an important part of this literacy. Recent studies show that students' success in memorizing the Qur'an is influenced by academic resilience, self-efficacy, and social support, especially from parents, which strengthen memorization achievement (Yundianto et al., 2023). These findings confirm that Qur'anic literacy develops through the integration of cognitive, spiritual, and psychological aspects, as well as through support from family and educational environments.

Another important aspect of Qur'anic literacy is its connection to the development of digital technology. The integration of technology into the study and learning of the Qur'an opens new opportunities to expand access, improve learning quality, and offer more relevant, interactive methods for the modern generation. The latest bibliometric study on the relationship between the Qur'an and technology reveals the dynamics of research development in this field, while highlighting the importance of a multidisciplinary approach and the use of data visualization tools to map research direction more precisely and strategically (An et al., 2024). The main recommendation from these findings emphasizes the need for cross-disciplinary collaboration, such as information technology, Islamic education, and data science, to deepen understanding and strengthen innovation in Qur'anic studies in the digital age, so that Qur'anic learning not only remains relevant but is also able to take advantage of technological advances to enrich the experience and quality of Qur'anic literacy.

The educational framework underlying the development of Qur'anic literacy needs to be revitalized to keep pace with modern intellectual and social dynamics. Contemporary thinking in Islamic education emphasizes the urgency of integrating the basic principles of Islamic education with contemporary academic approaches to create a progressive, dialogical learning atmosphere (Sahin, 2018). Students are not only guided to understand religious texts formally but also trained to hone their critical, reflective, and analytical thinking skills as they study the Qur'an. This paradigm shift is a strategic step to overcome stagnation and rigidity in the Islamic education system, while also shaping a generation able to read, interpret, and practice the teachings of the Qur'an in a more contextual and meaningful way in real life.

One of the main theoretical foundations in the development of Qur'anic literacy is the method of interpretation, which is the process of understanding and explaining the meaning of Qur'anic verses in depth. The interpretive approach continues to evolve, combining classical techniques with contemporary scientific approaches to remain relevant to modern intellectual needs and developments in scientific disciplines (An et al., 2024). Along with technological advances, digital innovations have also enriched the practice of Qur'anic literacy, for example, through ontology-based semantic search systems designed to improve the accuracy of retrieving and interpreting Qur'anic information (Yauri et al., 2013). This system works by mapping the relationships between concepts and meaning structures in the Qur'an, enabling a more contextual, in-depth search. The combination of traditional interpretive methodologies with advanced technology demonstrates how Qur'anic studies are becoming more adaptable to digital developments, opening new opportunities for more comprehensive, efficient, and meaningful knowledge-oriented learning and understanding of the Qur'an.

Strengthening Quranic literacy in the modern era also requires cultivating strong ethics and character, especially amid the development of artificial intelligence and digital technology (Hernawati et al., 2024). This effort includes a deep understanding of the principles of responsible technology use, adequate digital literacy, and the internalization of Islamic values as a moral foundation in the learning process. The integration of technological competence and Qur'an-based character education can help students recognize the potential and risks of technology, including AI, so that they can use it wisely for positive purposes.

### **Character Education and Religious Identity**

Character education and religious identity formation are closely related concepts that have been extensively studied in education and social studies. In Indonesia, character education is not only aimed at shaping positive behavior in general, but also at fostering a well-rounded Muslim

personality by internalizing moral, social, and spiritual values that form the foundation of students' lives. This approach aligns with the national policy on Strengthening Character Education (PPK), which specifically emphasizes the development of noble character (akhlakul karimah) as the core of the learning process and the formation of students' religious identity (Susilo et al., 2022).

In Aristotle's perspective, the connection between character education and civic education is fundamental, as both are complementary processes that shape moral individuals who contribute to public life. Aristotle's theory emphasizes that the main goal of education is not only to produce intelligent individuals but also to shape their character and moral virtues so they can fulfill their roles as good citizens. Thus, ethical values, social responsibility, and wisdom become the main pillars of student development. This thinking affirms that character and citizenship education cannot be separated, as together they foster moral awareness and a commitment to national life, including integrity, justice, and concern for the common good. In the modern context, this Aristotelian view remains highly relevant, as the strengthening of character and citizenship skills is the basis for forming an ethical society that actively participates in democratic life (Lu, 2024).

The Technological Pedagogical and Content Knowledge (TPACK) framework is a highly relevant theoretical foundation for the application of modern educational technology. This model emphasizes that the use of technology in learning is not only about technical skills but also requires a balanced integration of content understanding, appropriate pedagogical strategies, and effective use of technology so that the learning process can take place in a meaningful and interactive manner (Mishra & Koehler, 2009). In line with this, the SAMR (Substitution, Augmentation, Modification, Redefinition) model provides an operational framework for educators to evaluate the level of technology utilization in the classroom, ranging from the substitution stage, which only replaces traditional tools without significant changes, to the redefinition stage, which enables the creation of new learning experiences that were previously impossible without technology (Arantes, 2022).

The integration of character education with contemporary Islamic education focuses on harmonizing religious moral teachings with modern scientific principles. In this approach, core values such as honesty, responsibility, and exemplary behavior, derived from Islamic teachings, serve as a foundation for shaping students' personalities, while modern educational theories and practices strengthen a learning process that is more critical, creative, and relevant to the times. As explained by Fakhrurrazi et al., (2023), this integration not only aims to maintain the spiritual and moral foundations that are characteristic of Islamic education, but also ensures that students acquire the scientific insights, 21st-century skills, and social competencies necessary to face the challenges of the modern era.

### The Era of Technological Disruption

The era of technological disruption has fundamentally changed the landscape of information access, communication patterns, and student learning practices: learning resources are now scattered across digital platforms, interactions take place asynchronously and through multimedia, and the learning process is increasingly accelerated by algorithms and artificial intelligence-based tools. This change is not merely a matter of content availability, but also of how students select, interpret, and construct meaning from that content, a dynamic that positions digital media as an important mediator in religious meaning-making and religious community relations (Müller & Friemel, 2024). Technological disruption, as described by Christensen (1997), changes the way humans interact with information. The rise of social media, artificial intelligence (AI), and digital education platforms presents both opportunities and challenges in fostering the spiritual growth of young individuals.

The integration of artificial intelligence into religious practice and education increasingly demonstrates how technology can transform individuals' interactions with spiritual values. The presence of AI-based systems in religious activities, such as worship reminder applications, digital study platforms, and virtual assistants for studying holy scriptures, has opened new opportunities for easier access to religious knowledge and for personal spiritual deepening. However, this phenomenon has given rise to a new discourse on the authenticity of religious experience when spiritual practices are transferred to virtual spaces: do inner reflection, spiritual closeness, and

transcendent experiences retain the same meaning when mediated by algorithms and digital networks (Alkhouri, 2024). At the same time, the dynamics of globalization reinforce the trend of individualization in spiritual practices, where religious identity is no longer entirely shaped by traditional institutions or communities, but rather through personal experiences, preferences, and independently curated digital narratives. The role of the virtual world as a space for spiritual growth is becoming increasingly strong, allowing individuals to choose, build, and express their spirituality in a more flexible, personal, and cross-cultural format; this shifts the spiritual orientation from collective structures towards a more independent search for subjective meaning (Kale, 2004).

Campbell (2013) through the concept of "digital religion," asserts that digital technology no longer functions merely as a channel for distributing religious information, but has become a new space that shapes the way people practice religion, religious authority, and spiritual practices in society. In the context of contemporary Islamic development, the emergence of social media, digital Al-Qur'an applications, Islamic study podcasts, and online learning platforms has encouraged a paradigm shift in education and da'wah. This transformation can be seen in the increasing ease with which people can access interpretations, hadiths, and religious discussions in a flexible, personal manner, so that the process of religious learning is no longer tied to the physical space of a mosque or a formal classroom. Additionally, the emergence of new religious authority figures among Muslim digital influencers has helped shape religious perceptions and authority in society, marking a shift from traditional institution-based authority to authority grounded in networks, accessibility, and digital literacy.

### Theoretical Framework

The application of Critical Literacy Theory in Al-Qur'an literacy education opens up space for more in-depth, reflective, and contextual learning of religious texts. This theory highlights the close relationship between language, ideology, and power, so that in the context of Qur'anic studies, students can be invited to examine how the structure of language and discourse in the verses of the Qur'an play a role in shaping narratives of authority and certain social values (Janks, 2000). This approach focuses not only on the ability to read and understand texts literally, but also on the critical ability to identify implied meanings, historical contexts, and the socio-political dynamics behind the revelation of these verses.

This theoretical framework emphasizes the importance of inclusivity in Quranic literacy education by opening space for diverse interpretations and meanings of the sacred text. This approach encourages critical dialogue on various forms of interpretation and religious practices within the Muslim community, so that students not only understand their own beliefs but also learn to appreciate different views and the socio-cultural contexts that surround them. According to Garcia et al., (2015), this kind of approach plays an important role in expanding access and strengthening the inclusivity of religious education, as it allows students to engage reflectively with their own beliefs as well as those of others. Furthermore, students can be encouraged to critically examine the dominant narratives that have long shaped traditional understandings of the Qur'an, as well as develop the ability to evaluate and interpret texts contextually. This aligns with the principles of Critical Literacy Theory, which emphasize the importance of reflective, analytical, and evaluative thinking skills in relation to discourse on power and ideology (Janks, 2002).

Integrating multimodal learning into Al-Qur'an literacy education opens the door to a more dynamic, interactive, and contextual learning process. By incorporating various forms of media such as videos, artwork, music, and literature that represent the values and messages of the Qur'an, students are not only encouraged to understand the text linguistically, but also to interpret the spiritual and moral meanings contained within it through various forms of cultural and visual expression (Funk et al., 2016). This approach allows students to build emotional and intellectual connections with the content of the Qur'an and to develop critical thinking skills regarding the representation of religious values in the modern social context. In addition, the ethical dimension of Qur'anic literacy can be strengthened by presenting reflective discussions of

the moral dilemmas raised in the text, encouraging students to interpret religious teachings as guidelines for ethical decision-making and social awareness (Pahl & Rowsell, 2011).

## METHOD

This study uses a qualitative descriptive approach, a method that integrates descriptive and qualitative features to gain an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon, event, or social condition in its natural context. This approach focuses on depicting reality as it is, without manipulating variables, emphasizing the meaning and interpretation of non-numerical data. The data collected consists of qualitative information such as narratives, opinions, experiences, and behaviors that are analyzed systematically to produce a comprehensive understanding (Sandelowski, 2000). This study aims to understand and interpret phenomena that emerge naturally or through human intervention, providing a comprehensive view of social dynamics and their underlying values. It specifically explores developments among Indonesian Muslims within their distinctive cultural and religious context. The study also reviews previous research to evaluate how effectively digital Qur'an platforms have been used in learning, particularly in enhancing Qur'anic literacy in the digital era.

The method used in this study is a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) with a qualitative approach following the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) protocol (Xiao & Watson, 2017). This method was chosen to obtain a comprehensive picture of how the use of the digital Al-Qur'an contributes to improving Al-Qur'an reading literacy, especially among Indonesian Muslims, particularly students, in the context of the digital era. The SLR approach allows researchers to systematically identify, assess, and synthesize the results of previous studies, thereby revealing patterns, gaps, and directions for research development related to the topic under review. The literature search was conducted on several indexed academic databases, namely Scopus and Google Scholar. The keywords used in the search included combinations of: ("Qur'anic literacy" OR "Al-Quran literacy") AND ("religious identity" OR "Islamic identity") AND ("student" OR "university students") AND ("technology" OR "digital"). The search also used additional keywords such as "Islamic education", "Quran learning", "religious education", and "technology integration". Literature searches were conducted during the 2019-2024 period to ensure relevance to the context of contemporary technological disruption. The languages of publication used were English and Indonesian.

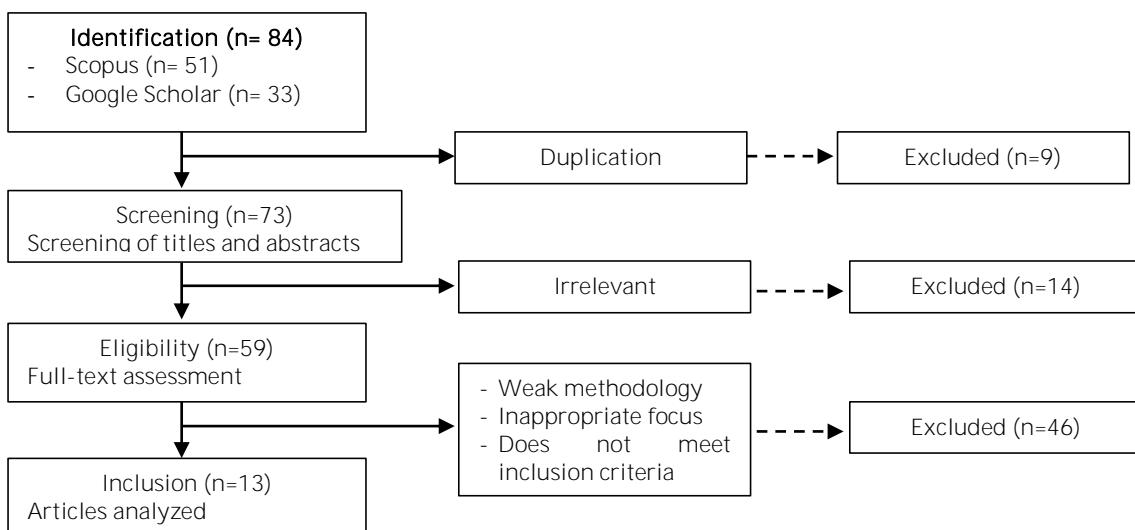


Figure 1. Diagram Alir PRISMA

Based on the initial identification process of 84 articles obtained from Scopus and Google Scholar, 73 articles entered the screening stage after removing duplications. During the screening stage, 14 articles were eliminated because they were deemed irrelevant to the research focus. A total of 59 articles were then further evaluated in the eligibility stage. At this stage, 46 articles were excluded due to methodological weaknesses, inappropriate focus, or not meeting the

established inclusion criteria. Ultimately, only 13 articles met all requirements and were included in the final analysis. This selection process ensured that only high-quality and relevant studies were used as the basis for the research discussion.

## RESULT

### Characteristics of the Studies Analyzed

Of the 13 articles analyzed, the majority were empirical studies ( $n = 9$ ) with a distribution of designs that included qualitative ( $n = 5$ ), quantitative ( $n = 2$ ), and mixed methods ( $n = 2$ ) approaches, accompanied by conceptual or theoretical studies ( $n = 4$ ) that strengthened the analytical foundation of the field. In terms of geographical distribution, the research was dominated by studies from Indonesia ( $n = 10$ ), with the remaining studies from Malaysia, Brunei Darussalam, and Pakistan ( $n = 3$ ). This composition shows that the issue of Qur'an literacy and religious identity among students has received significant academic attention in countries with Muslim majorities, where religious education and Qur'an literacy practices are integral to shaping the character and spiritual identity of the younger generation.

In terms of research focus, the 13 articles can be mapped into four main clusters that reflect the field's direction in religious literacy. The first cluster highlights Qur'anic literacy and religious competence among students ( $n = 5$ ), covering studies on the ability to read, understand, and internalize the values of the Qur'an. The second cluster focuses on students' religious identity and well-being ( $n = 3$ ) and examines how religious experiences and Qur'anic literacy practices contribute to identity formation and psychological well-being. The third cluster discusses the use of technology in Qur'anic learning ( $n = 3$ ), including digital media, learning applications, and online platforms. Meanwhile, the fourth cluster examines Islamic education strategies in higher education ( $n = 2$ ) related to curriculum development, learning models, and pedagogical approaches. The majority of studies involved undergraduate students (S1) from various study programs aged 18–25 years, indicating that this group is the main target in studies on Qur'anic literacy and the strengthening of religious identity in academic environments.

Table 1. Summary of Characteristics of 13 Articles Analyzed

Category	Sub-Categories	Total (n)	Percentage (%)
Type of Research	Empirical	9	69,23%
	Conceptual/Theoretical	4	30,77%
Empirical Research Design	Qualitative	5	38,46%
	Quantitative	2	15,38%
	Mixed Methods	2	15,38%
Geographical Distribution	Indonesia	10	76,92%
	Other countries (Malaysia, Brunei, Pakistan)	3	23,08%
Focus of Study	Al-Qur'an literacy & religious competence of students	5	38,46%
	Religious identity & well-being of students	3	23,08%
	Technology in Al-Qur'an learning	3	23,08%
	Islamic education strategies in higher education	2	15,38%

### The Impact of Technological Disruption on Students' Religious Identity

The impact of technological disruption on students' religious identity is complex and multidimensional, as it not only creates obstacles to the religious learning process but also opens

new opportunities to strengthen religious understanding. In Indonesia, the surge in internet usage during the pandemic shows that online religious education can pose a threat when students face technical obstacles, decreased motivation, digital distractions, and limited spiritual interaction, all common in face-to-face learning. These obstacles can weaken the internalization of religious values and students' emotional attachment to religious teachings. However, on the other hand, technological disruption also presents significant opportunities: religious education can take place continuously without space or time limitations, providing access to a more diverse range of literature, and encouraging teachers to develop more interactive and efficient learning methods. Thus, technology can be a catalyst for strengthening religious identity if it is used strategically and pedagogically, in line with [Utami \(2024\)](#) findings, which emphasize that challenges in online religious learning can actually lead to innovation and improved learning quality.

Analysis of various studies shows that technological disruption has an ambivalent effect on students' religious identity, which can be conceptually mapped into two main categories: negative and positive impacts. On the one hand, technological developments can pose challenges that may weaken the process of internalizing religious values, for example, through digital distractions, unverified information flows, and a tendency toward increasingly superficial religious practices. However, on the other hand, technology also offers significant opportunities for students to deepen their spiritual understanding through access to broader learning resources, involvement in digital religious communities, and the use of more flexible and interactive learning platforms.

#### a. Negative Impacts

##### 1. Fragmented Attention and Spiritual Distractions

Technological disruption—particularly through smartphones and social media—reinforces the attention economy, which systematically captures users' attention. For students, this condition significantly affects the quality of spiritual experiences that require deep attention, such as reciting the Qur'an, praying, or chanting. Constant notifications, infinite scrolling, and psychological pressure from FOMO (Fear of Missing Out) weaken students' ability to be fully present in religious activities. As a result, the time needed to deepen their spiritual relationship with the Qur'an is fragmented into short, superficial, and often meaningless sessions. In the long term, this condition can erode the consistency of worship and reduce spiritual sensitivity.

##### 2. Exposure to Contradictory Values

Social media, as a space dominated by popular culture, often promotes values that contradict Islamic moral principles, such as hedonism, materialism, and consumerism. Students who lack a strong foundation in religious literacy usually experience cognitive dissonance, a psychological tension when the Islamic values they hold conflict with those offered by influencers, viral content, or digital friendship groups. This dissonance not only disrupts religious identity stability but can also trigger moral confusion, value disorientation, and a decline in commitment to the teachings of the Qur'an.

##### 3. Crisis of Religious Authority

The internet has created an increasingly decentralized religious space, where the boundaries between the authority of religious scholars and "virtual authority" have become blurred. Students now have access to a variety of religious interpretations, ranging from textualist, moderate to extreme, without adequate verification mechanisms. This phenomenon reinforces the crisis of religious authority, as students can be more easily influenced by popular content that is methodologically and theologically inaccurate. A lack of literacy in the Qur'an and in the methodology of interpretation makes students vulnerable to forming partial, biased, or even deviant religious understandings. In certain cases, this condition can even lead to polarization of religious experience and the emergence of fanaticism without a scientific basis.

##### 4. Performative Religiosity

The digital landscape encourages the development of a performative religious culture, in which religious identity is expressed through symbolic practices on social media, such as sharing Islamic quotes, documenting worship, or showcasing spiritual activities to gain social recognition. Religious motivation shifts from a vertical orientation (internal spirituality and relationship with God) to a horizontal orientation (seeking validation and public recognition). This condition gives rise to a form of shallow religiosity, not based on deep understanding, but merely spiritual image-building. In the long term, performative religiosity can weaken sincerity, obscure the purpose of worship, and hinder the development of an authentic religious identity.

#### **b. Positive Impact**

##### **1. Accessibility of Religious Knowledge**

Digital technology provides broad access to Islamic literature, ranging from classical interpretations to contemporary knowledge, in a more accessible form. Students can now utilize platforms such as digital Al-Qur'an applications, hadith databases, scientific e-books, and videos of international scholars' studies. The digitization of religious texts makes the learning process more inclusive, flexible, and efficient, especially for students living in areas with limited access to conventional learning resources. This unlimited access contributes to the development of a more independent and knowledge-based religious identity.

##### **2. Religious Virtual Communities**

Social media and digital platforms have created a new ecosystem for the growth of supportive, interactive, and inclusive virtual religious communities. Through online study groups, da'wah circles, Islamic discussion forums, and Zoom/Telegram-based religious mentoring, students can obtain moral support, spiritual guidance, and opportunities to participate in cross-cultural and cross-border religious dialogue. These virtual communities broaden students' religious experiences, create a sense of belonging, and strengthen their religious identity amid rapid social change.

##### **3. Personalized Learning**

The Al-Qur'an learning application and digital education platform offer personalized learning features that enable students to learn at their own pace, according to their needs and abilities. Adaptive technologies such as speech recognition, AI-based tajwid correction, and learning analytics provide instant feedback and tailored material recommendations, increasing learning effectiveness and motivation. This personalized learning approach supports the development of a more mature religious identity by enabling a deeper, more sustainable learning experience.

##### **4. Contemporary Da'wah Innovation**

The digital era has given rise to new models of da'wah that are more creative, visual, and interactive. Through short videos, podcasts, Islamic animations, infographics, and da'wah content on TikTok/Instagram, religious messages have become easier to understand and more appealing to the younger generation. Millennial ustaz and Muslim content creators are building bridges between Islamic values and students' digital lifestyles. This innovative approach to da'wah can strengthen religious identity by presenting Islamic values in a format that resonates with the times.

#### **Strategy for Developing a Culture of Qur'an Literacy**

Strengthening a culture of Qur'an literacy requires a comprehensive approach that leverages synergy among families, educational institutions, and the broader social environment. Memorizing the Qur'an is not only seen as part of the Islamic education curriculum but also as a means of spiritual guidance, cognitive capacity development, and moral character building. Several studies confirm that parental involvement and teacher guidance have a significant influence on early childhood development in the tahfiz process. One of the most widely used methods is "talaqy," a direct learning process in which the teacher reads or dictates verses from the Qur'an, and students

imitate and repeat them under the teacher's supervision (Huzaery et al., 2024). This approach has proven effective in ensuring accurate pronunciation, consistent memorization, and internalization of Qur'anic values from an early age.

In addition to the role of key actors such as parents and teachers, broader social support also strengthens children's motivation and confidence in memorizing the Qur'an. A study by Yundianto et al., (2023) shows that parental involvement, both emotionally and instrumentally, can serve as a moderating factor, increasing children's perseverance and confidence in the memorization process. In line with technological developments, integrating Quran learning with digital devices and modern visualization has opened new opportunities to strengthen Quran literacy. Innovations such as cross-country research collaboration and the use of memorization support applications, interactive visual media, and analytics-based digital platforms make the learning process more engaging, focused, and effective (An et al., 2024). Thus, the synergy between multi-stakeholder collaboration and cutting-edge technology is an important component in building an adaptive Qur'an literacy culture in the digital age.

Based on a synthesis of various studies, strengthening the culture of Qur'anic literacy in higher education can be organized into five interconnected levels of an ecosystem that form a framework for sustainable development.

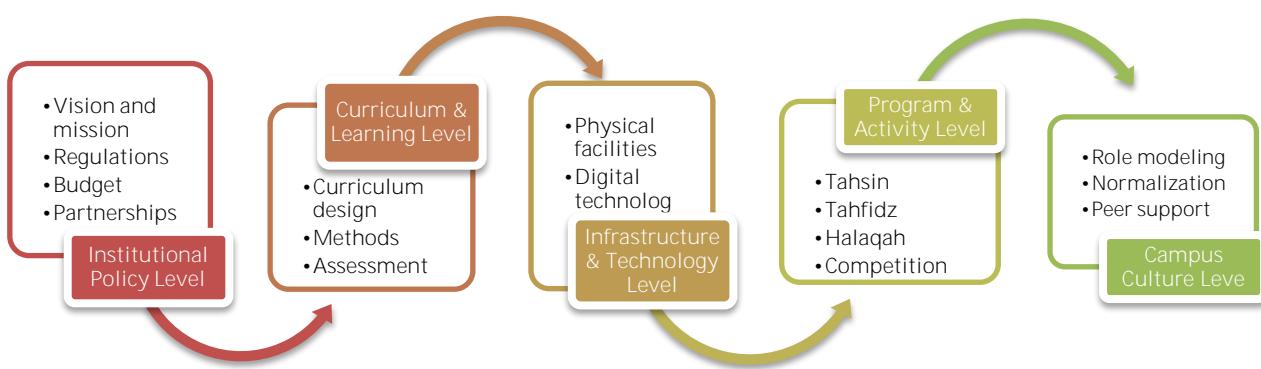


Figure 2. Five-Level Model of the Al-Qur'an Literacy Development Ecosystem in Higher Education Institutions

Source: Model constructed by the author based on the integration of previous research findings related to the Al-Qur'an literacy ecosystem in higher education institutions.

#### a. Institutional Policy Level

At the policy level, higher education institutions need to affirm their commitment to developing Quran literacy as part of their educational mandate and Islamic character building (Sofa et al., 2022). Among other things, this commitment is reflected in policy documents that explicitly prioritize strengthening Quran literacy. This policy can be realized by establishing Quran literacy as a graduate competency, integrating Quranic values into the curriculum, developing guidelines for implementing literacy programs, and allocating resources that support the sustainability of Quran learning activities. With clear, measurable, and sustainable policy directions, universities can build an academic ecosystem conducive to the systematic and structured growth of a culture of Qur'an literacy. These policies include:

- Establishing Quran literacy as a measurable graduate learning outcome.
- Providing adequate funding for Quran learning programs, media, and infrastructure, including capacity building for lecturers.
- Recruit educators, instructors, and practitioners of the Qur'an who have pedagogical, methodological, and professional competencies.
- Build a network of cooperation with credible institutions such as Qur'anic study centers, national tahfidz institutions, or certification institutions to ensure the program's quality and accountability.

### **b. Curriculum & Learning Level**

At the curriculum and learning level, a comprehensive, structured, and adaptive design is needed to accommodate the diversity of students' abilities in understanding the Qur'an (Kurniawan et al., 2024). Ideally, the curriculum should include clear learning outcomes, tiered material aligned with competency levels, interactive learning methods, and evaluations that assess cognitive, affective, and psychomotor skills. In addition, the curriculum needs to integrate contextual and student-centered pedagogical approaches, including the use of digital technology to strengthen access, effectiveness, and personalization of Qur'anic learning. With a comprehensive curriculum design, universities can ensure that Qur'anic literacy learning is implemented more systematically and meaningfully. The curriculum must:

- Built in stages, starting from beginner, intermediate, to advanced levels, so that competency development is more focused.
- Integrates technical elements (tahsin, tajwid, tafhidz), cognitive elements (tafsir, ulumul Qur'an), and practical dimensions (living Qur'an, implementation of values in life).
- Adopts a student-centered pedagogical approach through problem-based learning, experiential learning, project-based learning, and collaborative learning.
- Uses authentic assessment that not only measures reading and text comprehension skills, but also religious attitudes, consistency of practice, and the ability to apply Qur'anic values in academic and social contexts.

### **c. Infrastructure & Technology Level**

At the infrastructure and technology level, developing a culture of Qur'an literacy requires support for facilities that meet the needs of the current digital generation (Nurkholifah, 2024). Infrastructure includes the provision of comfortable and representative learning spaces, digital-based Qur'an laboratories or study centers, access to Qur'an learning applications and platforms, and the availability of technological devices such as computers, tablets, and a stable internet connection. In addition, institutions need to ensure an integrated learning management system that allows students to access Qur'an learning materials, modules, and services flexibly. With adequate infrastructure and the latest technology, Qur'an literacy activities can be more effective, engaging, and aligned with today's students' learning styles. This infrastructure includes:

- A digital library that provides interpretations, hadiths, classical Islamic texts, and various scientific references on Islam.
- An Al-Qur'an learning application integrated with the campus Learning Management System (LMS) so that the learning process can be carried out at any time.
- Tahsin and Tajwid laboratories with speech recognition technology to provide automatic feedback.
- Multimedia rooms that enable Quran learning through visual approaches, interactive audio, and other creative media.
- Optimization of campus mosques as learning hubs, not only places of worship, but also representative centers for Quranic education.

### **d. Program & Activity Level**

At the program and activity levels, for Al-Qur'an literacy to be truly internalized in students, universities need to provide a series of continuous, systematic, and well-organized programs (Hakim, 2019). These programs must be designed to foster consistent student engagement, facilitate continuous learning, and strengthen students' understanding and experience of the Qur'an across academic and non-academic contexts. In addition, the activities developed need to prioritize character development, strengthening spirituality, and improving comprehensive Qur'an literacy competencies. With harmony between objectives, implementation, and evaluation, universities can create a strong, inclusive Qur'an literacy culture oriented towards the formation of a Qur'anic personality, including:

- A mandatory tahsin program for all new students as a foundation for understanding how to read the Qur'an correctly.
- A memorization program with a minimum target tailored to the abilities of each student.
- Small-group mentoring or Quran study circles using peer-learning methods.
- Religious competitions such as MTQ, MHQ, or tafsir competitions are used to motivate achievement and bring out new talent.
- Regular movements such as One Day One Ayah or One Day One Page as a daily habit.
- Thematic studies, kultum, and dawn lectures that relate the values of the Qur'an to contemporary issues and the realities of student life.

#### e. Campus Culture Level

At the campus culture level, the highest stage in developing Quran literacy is creating an environment that encourages students to develop a love for, closeness to, and positive habits toward the Quran ([Akbar et al., 2023](#)). This culture is reflected in both the academic and non-academic environments, where Quranic values are embedded in the educational community's identity and daily practices. The campus environment should be shaped to encourage the internalization of moral, ethical, and spiritual values grounded in the Qur'an, while facilitating social interactions that reflect the spirit of inclusive Islam. This can be achieved through:

- The exemplary behavior of leaders, lecturers, and educational staff in their interaction with the Qur'an so that they become role models for students.
- Normalization of Qur'anic activities in daily campus activities, such as reading the Qur'an before class or organizational activities.
- Strengthening of student communities that support each other (peer support) and provide positive encouragement in religious activities.
- Integration of Qur'anic values into organizational management, student activities, and academic culture.
- Practice storytelling or share inspirational stories about spiritual transformation experiences from the Qur'an to strengthen students' emotional and spiritual bonds.

### Integrative Model of Al-Qur'an Literacy Culture in Strengthening Religious Identities

Based on the synthesis of findings, this study developed an integrative model that describes how Al-Qur'an literacy culture serves as a strategy for strengthening students' religious identity in the era of technological disruption. This model shows that social changes triggered by digital media, the internet, and globalization require a robust Al-Qur'an literacy ecosystem, supported by institutional policies, adaptive curricula, supporting infrastructure, and relevant learning programs. This ecosystem then encourages the development of Al-Qur'an literacy at the individual level, including technical, cognitive, affective, and practical abilities. The integration of these four dimensions directly strengthens students' faith, religious practices, and morals, ultimately resulting in positive impacts such as mental resilience, spiritual well-being, moral integrity, social engagement, and leadership skills in facing the challenges of the digital era.

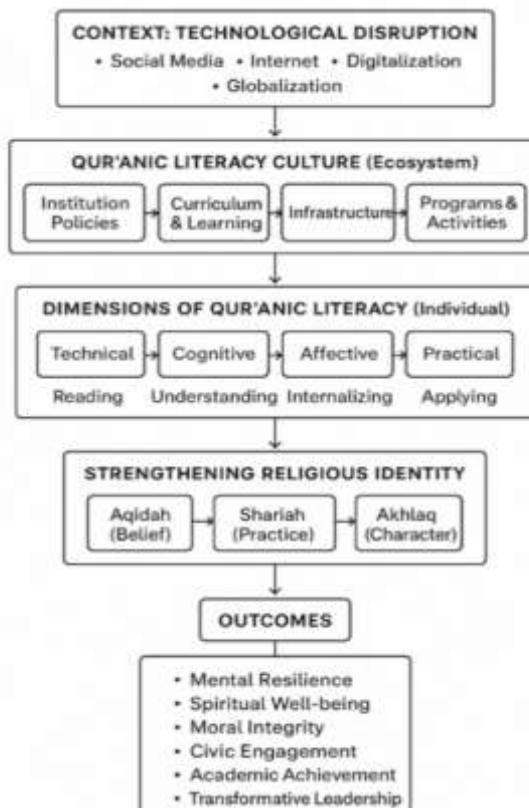


Figure 3. An integrative model of Qur'an literacy and religious identity formation

The chart illustrates a comprehensive flow that provides a thorough overview of how technological disruption shapes the direction and quality of Al-Qur'an literacy culture in educational institutions. Technological disruption—including the expansion of social media, internet penetration, digitization of learning resources, and globalization—has created new conditions that require adaptation in the management of Al-Qur'an learning. At the ecosystem level, educational institutions are required to formulate responsive policies, design curricula relevant to the needs of the digital age, provide adequate learning infrastructure, and develop innovative and sustainable religious programs. This kind of Qur'an literacy ecosystem enables the learning process to be adaptive, contextual, and in line with the latest technological developments, so that students can continue to access, understand, and appreciate the values of the Qur'an effectively even in a rapidly changing digital environment (Yahya, 2023; Zaimina & Zahrah, 2024).

Concerning the individual level, the model emphasizes that Quran literacy should be understood as a multidimensional competency. The technical dimension emphasizes the ability to read the Qur'an well; the cognitive dimension concerns the process of understanding the meaning of its verses; the affective dimension concerns the internalization of spiritual values; and the practical dimension directs students to apply the teachings of the Qur'an in their daily lives. When these four dimensions develop in an integrated manner, individuals will experience a strengthening of their religious identity, which is reflected in three main aspects: aqidah as the foundation of belief, sharia as a guide for practice, and akhlak as a manifestation of character. Strengthening religious identity through Qur'anic literacy has been shown to contribute to mental resilience, spiritual health, moral development, social engagement, improved academic achievement, and the emergence of transformative leadership among students in the digital age (Muin & Setyawan, 2024). This strengthening of identity then produces various positive outcomes, such as mental resilience, spiritual well-being, moral integrity, involvement in social activities, academic achievement, and transformative leadership.

## Digital Platforms for Quranic Learning

To strengthen understanding of how a culture of Quranic literacy is built through the use of digital technology, a clear identification of the types of applications and platforms currently used by students and educational institutions is necessary. Digital transformation not only provides electronic copies of Quranic texts but also enriches the learning process through interactive features, flexible accessibility, and a more personalized approach to user needs. Digital technology enables students to study the Quran anytime and anywhere, without the constraints of space and time, allowing for more organized and focused Quranic recitation, tadarus (Quran recitation), and verse study.

Furthermore, technology integration includes the presence of memorization companion applications and an artificial intelligence-based automatic evaluation system capable of providing real-time feedback on reading quality. This innovation significantly increases the effectiveness of tariq and tajweed coaching, while also strengthening students' motivation to build a close relationship with the Quran. With the various features they offer, digital platforms play a significant role in creating a sustainable and relevant Quranic literacy ecosystem for the digital generation. Some commonly used Quranic learning platforms are shown in Table 2 below:

Table 2. Digital Platforms and Applications to Strengthen Quranic Literacy

No.	Platform/Application	Key Features	Relevance to Quranic Literacy
1.	Quran.com	Digital manuscripts, audio reciter, tafsir, verse search	Facilitates quick access to readings and understanding of verses; suitable for both academic and daily study
2.	Muslim Pro	Digital mushaf, colored tajweed, tadarus reminder	Supporting the habit of daily tadarus and strengthening worship routines
3.	Umma (Ummaland)	Digital Mushaf, Qur'an learning community	Building a culture of Qur'anic literacy in the youth community
4.	Ayat (KSU)	Digital mushaf, classical/contemporary interpretation, audio	Useful for deepening the meaning of verses and academic studies
5.	Learn Quran Tajwid	Tajweed module, interactive audio, quiz practice	Improve the ability to read and understand Tajweed independently
6.	Learn Quran Tafsir	Interpretation verse by verse, concise and scientific	Developing literacy in understanding the meaning of the Qur'an comprehensively
7.	Tarteel AI	AI recitation checker, automatic feedback	Improving the quality of student reading in real-time based on AI
8.	Quran Companion	Gamification of memorization, progress tracker	Increasing memorization motivation through a gamified approach
9.	e-Hafidz / Hafidzku	Online memorization deposit management, video task	Supporting structured tafhidz activities through digital portfolios
10.	Zoom / Google Meet	Live audio-video for talaqqi and tasmi'	Enables direct learning with ustaz/ustazah without space limitations
11.	LMS Kampus (Moodle, SPADA, Canvas)	Digital modules, discussion forums, interpretation assignments	Integrating Qur'anic literacy into formal higher education learning
12.	Quran Kids Learning Games	Game edukatif ayat & tajwid	Attracting the interest of the younger generation through gamification of learning

## DISCUSSION

The findings of this study confirm that Qur'anic literacy among students is much more than just technical reading skills or mere memorization of texts; it is a fundamental, transformative process in the formation of their religious identity. Within this framework, Qur'anic literacy is described in four hierarchical layers—technical, cognitive, affective, and practical—which parallel Bloom's taxonomy of learning (modified for the context of Islamic education). At the technical-performative level, although considered fundamental, its role cannot be ignored: the ability to read the Qur'an well is the main “gateway” to accessing the sacred text. For students who have not mastered this skill, psychological barriers such as shame or low self-esteem often arise, which then encourage avoidance of communal religious activities and hinder the internalization of spiritual values.

The cognitive-comprehension dimension plays an increasingly crucial role in this era of information overload, when students are confronted with a variety of religious interpretations, religious narrative constructions, and widespread misinformation and disinformation on social media. Students who have strong cognitive literacy of the Qur'an—including an understanding of interpretation, the historical context of the revelation of verses (asbāb al-nuzūl), and the basic principles of maqāṣid syarī'ah—can select, critique, and assess the validity of religious claims more objectively. This ability places them in a more protected position against the trap of extreme or manipulative religious interpretations. [Akib \(2024\)](#) research also confirms that a good level of Qur'anic literacy functions as an intellectual fortress, so that it can act as an “interpretation immunity” that prevents students from being drawn into radical thinking and deviant patterns of interpretation.

In the affective-spiritual dimension, this study shows that emotional and spiritual connections with the Qur'an, such as peace of mind (“sakinah”) and the experience of guidance, serve as a continuous, intrinsic motivator to continue engaging with the Qur'an throughout life. Conventional Qur'an learning models that emphasize mechanical reading or memorization often neglect this dimension, even though it is precisely here that the greatest potential for transforming religious identity emerges.

The pinnacle of Qur'anic literacy is the practical-transformative dimension, in which spiritual understanding and experience are translated into concrete behavior. Students who reach this level are not only “readers” of the Qur'an, but also “practitioners” of its values: they use the Qur'an as a paradigm for problem-solving, decision-making, and character-building. At this stage, Qur'anic values are internalized to such an extent that they become the basis for their social contributions, for example, in community service, professional ethics, or commitment to social justice.

The concept of blended religiosity that emerged from this study is very interesting and warrants further development. This term refers to religious practices that harmonize online and offline, traditional and modern, and individual and communal elements. Students who possess mature blended religiosity can use digital media—such as Quran memorization apps, online studies, and discussion forums—to deepen their Quran literacy while still maintaining essential traditional religious practices, such as learning directly from teachers, participating in physical community activities, and engaging in collective rituals. In this way, they not only practice worship individually through technology, but also build a strong religious identity through social connections and real traditions, making religion a harmony between the digital world and real life.

This study makes an important theoretical contribution by presenting a multidimensional, hierarchical construct of Qur'anic literacy, thereby reframing literacy as a transformative process encompassing cognitive, affective, and practical aspects. This approach also opens the door for Qur'anic literacy to serve as a prototype in the development of literacy concepts in other religious texts. In addition, this study integrates the perspectives of religious identity theory, literacy theory, and technology studies, resulting in a comprehensive theoretical framework for understanding the formation of religious identity in the digital age as a hybrid construction that

combines traditional and modern elements. This research also offers a new understanding of literacy culture as a holistic ecosystem, not merely a series of programs or interventions, enabling this framework to be applied to the development of academic, research, and innovation cultures in higher education.

## CONCLUSION

The culture of Qur'an literacy in higher education is not merely a religious education program but a fundamental strategy for shaping a strong religious identity among students amid the complexities of the digital age. Amidst technological disruption that presents both challenges and opportunities, Qur'an literacy serves as a moral compass, a source of meaning, and a foundation of character, equipping students to face life with wisdom and integrity. Strengthening this culture requires the collective commitment of all stakeholders, comprehensive and systemic strategies, and the wise use of technology. With a holistic approach, universities can build an ecosystem that produces a young Muslim generation that is literate in the Qur'an, committed to Islamic values, and responsive to the dynamics of the times.

This study examines in depth how the culture of Qur'anic literacy plays a role in strengthening students' religious identity through a qualitative descriptive approach and a systematic literature review based on the PRISMA protocol, and finds that digital technology has two spectrums of influence: negative impacts in the form of fragmented attention, exposure to conflicting values, the fading of traditional religious authority, and the emergence of performative religiosity; and positive effects in the form of easier access to religious knowledge, the formation of virtual religious communities, opportunities for more personalized learning, and relevant innovations in da'wah. Based on these findings, this study proposes a five-level model of the Al-Qur'an literacy ecosystem, comprising institutional policy, curriculum and learning, technological infrastructure, coaching programs, and campus culture, that integrally explains how Al-Qur'an literacy can serve as a strategy for strengthening religious identity in the digital age.

This model positions Qur'an literacy as a multidimensional competency encompassing technical, cognitive, affective, and practical aspects that contribute to the formation of faith, the development of worship habits, and the internalization of moral values. This study also introduces the concept of mixed religiosity, a form of religiousness that combines online and offline practices, traditional and modern practices, and personal and communal dimensions. These findings are expected to spark dialogue, sustainable innovation, and systematic evaluation in strengthening the religious identity of the younger generation of Muslims through an adaptive and transformative culture of Qur'anic literacy.

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