

Islamic Ethical and Epistemological Perspectives on Harmful Digital Content in Digital Literacy Education

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ABSTRACT

Digital technology has greatly transformed the way people interact, create, and share information while simultaneously increasing their exposure to harmful digital content, such as hate speech, misinformation, cyberbullying, and unethical online communication. These challenges highlight the need to promote digital literacy education through ethical and value-based approaches. This study aims to examine harmful digital content from the perspectives of Islamic ethics and Islamic epistemology and to explore their contributions to digital literacy education. The study employs a qualitative library research design by analyzing relevant literature from the Qur'an, Hadith, classical and contemporary Islamic scholarship, as well as recent studies on digital literacy and artificial intelligence. The findings reveal that Islamic ethical principles, namely amanah, akhlaq, tabayyun, and Maqāsid al-Sharī'ah, provide a comprehensive moral foundation for responsible digital communication, while Islamic epistemological approaches emphasize critical inquiry, the authenticity of knowledge, and the responsible evaluation of information. Integrating these perspectives into digital literacy education can foster critical thinking, ethical awareness, and responsible digital citizenship among students in today's digital society. This study proposes a conceptual framework that integrates Islamic ethical and epistemological values into digital literacy education as a foundation for addressing harmful digital content in the digital era.

Keywords:

Digital Literacy Education; Harmful Digital Content; Islamic Ethics; Islamic Epistemology; Digital Citizenship.

Kata Kunci:

Pendidikan Literasi Digital; Konten Digital Berbahaya; Etika Islam; Epistemologi Islam; Kewargaan Digital.

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ABSTRAK

Teknologi digital telah mengubah secara signifikan cara masyarakat berinteraksi, menciptakan, dan berbagi informasi, sekaligus meningkatkan paparan terhadap konten digital yang berbahaya, seperti ujaran kebencian, misinformasi, perundungan siber, dan komunikasi daring yang tidak etis. Tantangan tersebut menegaskan pentingnya penguatan pendidikan literasi digital melalui pendekatan yang berbasis etika dan nilai. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji konten digital berbahaya dari perspektif etika Islam dan epistemologi Islam serta mengeksplorasi kontribusinya terhadap pendidikan literasi digital. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain penelitian kepustakaan melalui analisis berbagai sumber yang relevan, meliputi Al-Qur'an, Hadis, literatur Islam klasik dan kontemporer, serta kajian terkini mengenai literasi digital dan kecerdasan buatan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa prinsip-prinsip etika Islam, yaitu amanah, akhlak, tabayyun, dan Maqāsid al-Sharī'ah, memberikan landasan moral yang komprehensif bagi komunikasi digital yang bertanggung jawab, sedangkan pendekatan epistemologi Islam menekankan pentingnya berpikir kritis, autentisitas pengetahuan, dan evaluasi informasi yang bertanggung jawab. Integrasi kedua perspektif tersebut ke dalam pendidikan literasi digital dapat mendorong berkembangnya kemampuan berpikir kritis, kesadaran etis, dan kewargaan digital yang bertanggung jawab di kalangan peserta didik dalam masyarakat digital saat ini. Penelitian ini menawarkan suatu kerangka konseptual yang mengintegrasikan nilai-nilai etika dan epistemologi Islam ke dalam pendidikan literasi digital sebagai landasan untuk mengatasi konten digital yang berbahaya pada era digital.



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PENDAHULUAN

Digital technology has significantly transformed contemporary society, reshaping how people communicate, learn, and engage in social interactions (Ma, 2023; Grosman-Rimon & Wegier, 2024; Khoirunnisa et al., 2025). Digital platforms such as social media, online learning environments, and AI-supported applications have created unprecedented opportunities for learning and information exchange. At the same time, these technologies have contributed to the rapid proliferation of harmful and misleading online content, including misinformation, cyberbullying, hate speech, online harassment, and AI-generated disinformation, increasingly influencing the moral, intellectual, and psychological development of learners (Yusfiarto et al., 2023; Chidi et al., 2024; Fatah et al., 2024). These developments have positioned digital literacy as a fundamental educational competency rather than merely a technical skill.

Digital literacy extends beyond the ability to access and use digital technologies. It encompasses the capacity to critically analyze information, distinguish credible knowledge from misinformation, communicate responsibly, and engage ethically in digital environments. Recent educational studies suggest that digital literacy should integrate cognitive, ethical, and social dimensions to prepare learners for responsible participation in the digital age (Longoria et al., 2022; Duani et al., 2024; Przybilowicz & Cunha, 2024). Consequently, educational institutions, including Islamic educational institutions, are increasingly expected to equip students with digital competencies, critical thinking skills, and strong moral values.

From the perspective of Islamic education, ethical communication in digital environments is not an isolated concern but an integral part of the broader objectives of Islamic education, which seeks to develop individuals who are intellectually competent, morally upright, and socially responsible. Islamic ethical principles, including *amanah* (trustworthiness), *akhlāq* (moral character), *tabayyun* (verification of information), and the objectives of *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah*, provide valuable guidance for evaluating digital interactions and online behavior (Auda, 2013). These principles encourage individuals to verify information before sharing it, avoid actions that may harm others or society, and uphold honesty, justice, and responsibility in all forms of communication. Such ethical values are becoming increasingly relevant in addressing contemporary digital challenges, where information spreads rapidly and users are often unable to critically evaluate its credibility.

In addition to ethical considerations, Islamic epistemology provides an important foundation for understanding how knowledge should be acquired, validated, and applied. Unlike purely technological approaches that emphasize computational efficiency, Islamic epistemology is grounded in the authenticity of knowledge, the credibility of sources, rational inquiry, and moral responsibility. Classical Islamic scholarship recognizes complementary approaches to knowledge acquisition, namely *bayānī* (textual reasoning based on revelation), *burhānī* (logical and empirical reasoning), and *'irfānī* (spiritual and experiential understanding), as pathways to balanced and holistic knowledge construction. These epistemological foundations remain highly relevant in today's digital society, particularly in evaluating the credibility of online information and combating the spread of misinformation.

With the rapid advancement of artificial intelligence, debates surrounding knowledge production, information authenticity, and ethical decision-making have become increasingly prominent. AI systems are now capable of generating highly convincing textual and visual content, raising concerns about the authenticity, authority, and reliability of digital information. Recent studies emphasize the importance of integrating Islamic ethical principles into AI governance to ensure that technological advancements promote human welfare, justice, and accountability

((Knight et al., 2024; Ghozali, 2025). Likewise, contemporary researchers argue that integrating Islamic educational values into AI-supported learning environments is essential for strengthening ethical awareness and fostering critical digital literacy among learners (Astuti et al., 2025; Molin et al., 2025; Vivin et al., 2025)

Although previous studies have examined digital literacy, harmful digital content, AI ethics, and Islamic educational values, these discussions have generally remained fragmented. Research on harmful digital content has largely focused on technological solutions for content detection, whereas studies on Islamic ethics have primarily emphasized normative discussions without directly addressing digital content. Similarly, research on Islamic epistemology remains limited and has given little attention to its practical role in helping learners critically evaluate harmful digital information in contemporary educational settings. Consequently, there is still no integrated framework that combines Islamic ethics, Islamic epistemology, and digital literacy education to address the challenges posed by harmful digital content.

Therefore, this study aims to analyze harmful digital content from the perspectives of Islamic ethics and Islamic epistemology and to propose a conceptual framework for strengthening digital literacy education in the digital era. This study contributes to the growing discourse on Islamic education by offering a value-based framework that promotes critical thinking, responsible digital communication, and ethical digital citizenship among learners in contemporary Muslim societies.

METODE PENELITIAN

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative library research approach to examine harmful digital content from the perspectives of Islamic ethics and Islamic epistemology within the context of digital literacy education. Library research is appropriate for conceptual studies that aim to synthesize existing scholarly literature and develop a theoretical framework through the critical analysis of authoritative sources rather than through empirical data collection (Creswell & Poth, 2023). Accordingly, this study synthesizes recent literature on digital literacy and harmful digital content and integrates it with the principles of Islamic education to develop a value-based framework for responsible digital communication.

Data Sources

This study utilized both primary and secondary data sources. Primary sources consisted of relevant verses from the Qur'an, authentic Hadith, and classical Islamic texts addressing ethical communication, knowledge verification, and moral responsibility. Secondary sources included peer-reviewed journal articles, scholarly books, conference proceedings, and policy reports related to Islamic ethics, Islamic epistemology, digital literacy education, artificial intelligence, and harmful digital content. The literature was selected based on three criteria: relevance to the research objectives, credibility of the source, and its contribution to discussions on Islamic education in the digital era. Literature searches were conducted using various keyword combinations, including *Islamic digital literacy*, *harmful digital content*, *tabayyun*, *Islamic epistemology*, *Islamic ethics*, *digital citizenship*, and *AI in Islamic education*.

Data Analysis

The collected literature was analyzed using thematic content analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The analysis involved systematically reviewing, coding, categorizing, and synthesizing the relevant literature to identify key themes, including harmful digital content, digital literacy

education, Islamic ethical values (*amanah*, *akhlaq*, *tabayyun*, and *Maqāṣid al-Sharīʿah*), and Islamic epistemological approaches (*bayānī*, *burhānī*, and *ʿirfānī*). The thematic synthesis enabled the development of an integrated conceptual framework illustrating how Islamic ethical and epistemological values can strengthen digital literacy education and promote responsible digital citizenship in contemporary digital society.

HASIL DAN PEMBAHASAN

Harmful Digital Content as a Modern Problem for Digital Literacy Education

Digital technology has revolutionized education by expanding access to knowledge, communication, and innovative learning approaches (UNESCO, 2023). However, the rapid expansion of digital platforms has also accelerated the spread of harmful digital content, including cyberbullying, misinformation, hate speech, online harassment, and AI-generated deceptive content. These phenomena have emerged as significant challenges for educational institutions because they not only affect learners' ability to access accurate information but also influence their moral development, critical thinking, and responsible digital engagement (Kranthi et al., 2024; Badriyah, 2025).

Digital platforms differ from traditional information environments because information can be disseminated rapidly, even without proper verification (Egbert & Ulbricht, 2024). As a result, students are increasingly exposed to inaccurate, misleading, or manipulated information that may shape their perceptions, values, and decision-making. Recent studies emphasize that the growing prevalence of misinformation and AI-generated content has made information verification more complex, positioning digital literacy as a fundamental competency for twenty-first-century education rather than merely a technical skill. Therefore, digital literacy should not only equip students with technical competencies but also cultivate their moral awareness and critical thinking.

Within the context of Islamic education, harmful digital content represents not only a technological issue but also a moral and educational challenge. Islamic education aims to develop individuals who possess intellectual competence (*ʿilm*), moral excellence (*akhlaq*), and social responsibility (*amanah*). Consequently, the widespread circulation of misinformation, hate speech, and unethical online behavior contradicts the objectives of Islamic education, which emphasize the preservation of human dignity, honesty, justice, and respect in communication.

The rapid development of generative artificial intelligence has further intensified concerns regarding the authenticity of knowledge and the ethical use of digital information. AI systems are capable of generating convincing text, images, and videos that may appear authentic despite containing false or misleading information, thereby increasing the risk of misinformation and digital deception. This development demonstrates that digital literacy education should not rely solely on technological competencies but must also incorporate ethical considerations and knowledge verification. Accordingly, students require educational guidance to critically evaluate digital information before accepting, using, and disseminating it.

The findings indicate that harmful digital content constitutes a multidimensional educational challenge encompassing technological, ethical, epistemological, and social dimensions. Ethical digital communication cannot be achieved solely through technological solutions, including artificial intelligence, despite its ability to detect harmful content. Instead, digital literacy education should integrate ethical values with critical knowledge verification to prepare learners to participate responsibly and ethically in digital environments.

The thematic analysis identified five major categories of harmful digital content affecting digital learning environments: misinformation, cyberbullying, hate speech, online harassment, and AI-generated deceptive content. Although these categories differ in form and function, they all threaten the development of responsible digital citizens by undermining information credibility, respectful social interaction, and public trust. Therefore, educational efforts should emphasize preventive strategies grounded in ethical awareness rather than relying exclusively on technological interventions.

Harmful digital content can undermine learners' well-being, distort information, and negatively influence values and behavior.

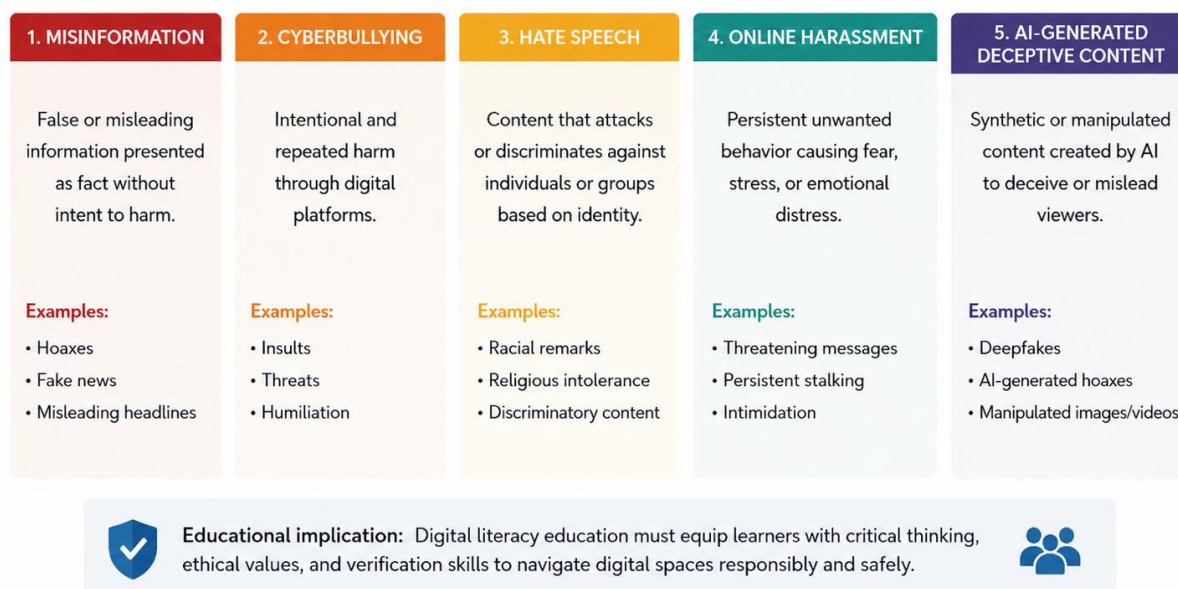


Figure 1. Classification of Harmful Digital Content in Digital Literacy Education

The findings presented in Figure 1 demonstrate that harmful digital content not only undermines the quality and credibility of information but also influences learners' moral behavior and social interactions. This finding is consistent with previous studies emphasizing that ethical education, critical thinking, and responsible communication are essential components of digital literacy and should be systematically integrated into educational practices (Ahmad et al., 2025; Papakostas, 2025). Therefore, strengthening digital literacy education requires an integrated approach that combines technological competence with Islamic ethical values and epistemological principles, enabling students to navigate digital environments responsibly and ethically.

Islamic Ethical Approaches to Harmful Digital Content

Islamic ethics provides a comprehensive moral framework for guiding responsible behavior in digital environments. Unlike conventional approaches to digital literacy, which primarily emphasize technical competencies, Islamic educational philosophy integrates moral responsibility, critical thinking, and ethical communication into the learning process. Consequently, harmful digital content should be understood not merely as a technological challenge but also as an educational and ethical issue that requires value-based solutions (Pathak & Kaushik, 2024; Zou et al., 2023).

The thematic analysis identified four key Islamic ethical principles that strengthen digital literacy education: *amanah* (trustworthiness), *akhlaq* (moral character), *tabayyun* (verification of

information), and *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* (the objectives of Islamic law). These principles encourage responsible communication, careful verification of information before dissemination, and respectful digital interaction. The importance of information verification is explicitly emphasized in the Qur'an:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِن جَاءَكُمْ فَاسِقٌ

“O you who believe! If a wicked person comes to you with news, verify it...” (QS. Al-Hujarat [49]: 6).

Among these principles, *tabayyun* serves as one of the fundamental ethical foundations for addressing misinformation, fake news, and AI-generated deceptive content in today's digital environment. Likewise, *amanah* promotes accountability in the creation, use, and dissemination of digital information, while *akhlaq* encourages respectful communication and discourages behaviors such as cyberbullying, hate speech, and online harassment. Furthermore, *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* provides a broader ethical orientation by emphasizing the protection of human dignity, intellect, and social harmony in digital interactions (Chapra, 2008; Amima et al., 2025; Wibowo, 2025)

The findings of this study indicate that Islamic ethics complements contemporary digital literacy by providing moral guidance that cannot be replaced by technological solutions alone. Although artificial intelligence can assist in detecting harmful digital content, ethical values remain indispensable for developing responsible digital citizens who are capable of making informed and morally sound decisions. Therefore, integrating Islamic ethical principles into digital literacy education can strengthen students' critical thinking, ethical awareness, and responsible participation in digital society (Alqhaiwi et al., 2023; Kamali, 2008).

Table 1. Islamic Ethical Principles for Digital Literacy Education

Islamic Ethical Principle	Educational Meaning	Application in Digital Literacy Education
Amanah	Trustworthiness and responsibility	Share accurate information and act responsibly online
Akhlaq	Moral character	Promote respectful communication and prevent cyberbullying
Tabayyun	Verification of information	Fact-check information before sharing
Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah	Protection of public welfare	Foster ethical digital citizenship and protect human dignity

The thematic analysis demonstrates that these four Islamic ethical principles provide a comprehensive moral foundation for responsible digital literacy education. As summarized in Table 1, each principle contributes distinct educational values that support responsible communication, ethical decision-making, and the development of digital citizenship grounded in Islamic values.

Islamic Epistemological Perspectives on Harmful Digital Content

In addition to ethical considerations, addressing harmful digital content requires an epistemological perspective that enables individuals to evaluate the authenticity and credibility of information. Islamic epistemology emphasizes the acquisition of knowledge from trustworthy sources, critical inquiry, and rigorous verification. These principles are highly relevant to digital literacy education, as they encourage learners to critically examine the information they access, evaluate, and disseminate in digital environments (Ashoumi et al., 2025; Noer et al., 2023).

The thematic analysis identified three complementary epistemological approaches within the Islamic intellectual tradition: *Bayānī*, *Burhānī*, and *ʿIrfānī*. The *Bayānī* approach is grounded in knowledge derived from the Qur'an and Sunnah, providing an ethical and normative foundation for evaluating digital information. The *Burhānī* approach emphasizes logical reasoning and empirical evidence, enabling learners to critically assess the credibility and reliability of digital sources. Meanwhile, the *ʿIrfānī* approach highlights spiritual awareness and moral consciousness, encouraging individuals to apply knowledge responsibly for the benefit of society.

These epistemological approaches are closely aligned with the objectives of contemporary digital literacy because they strengthen learners' ability to distinguish authentic information from misinformation, disinformation, and other forms of digital deception (Harris et al., 2025; Yang et al., 2023). Rather than relying solely on technological tools, Islamic epistemology advocates the balanced integration of revelation, rational inquiry, and ethical responsibility in evaluating information. This perspective is particularly relevant in the era of artificial intelligence, where digital content can be generated rapidly and convincingly, making the assessment of authenticity and credibility increasingly challenging.

The findings of this thematic analysis demonstrate that *Bayānī*, *Burhānī*, and *ʿIrfānī* collectively constitute a comprehensive epistemological framework for evaluating digital information. By integrating these complementary approaches, learners are better equipped to critically examine digital content while maintaining ethical responsibility and intellectual integrity. The conceptual relationship among these approaches is illustrated in Figure 2.

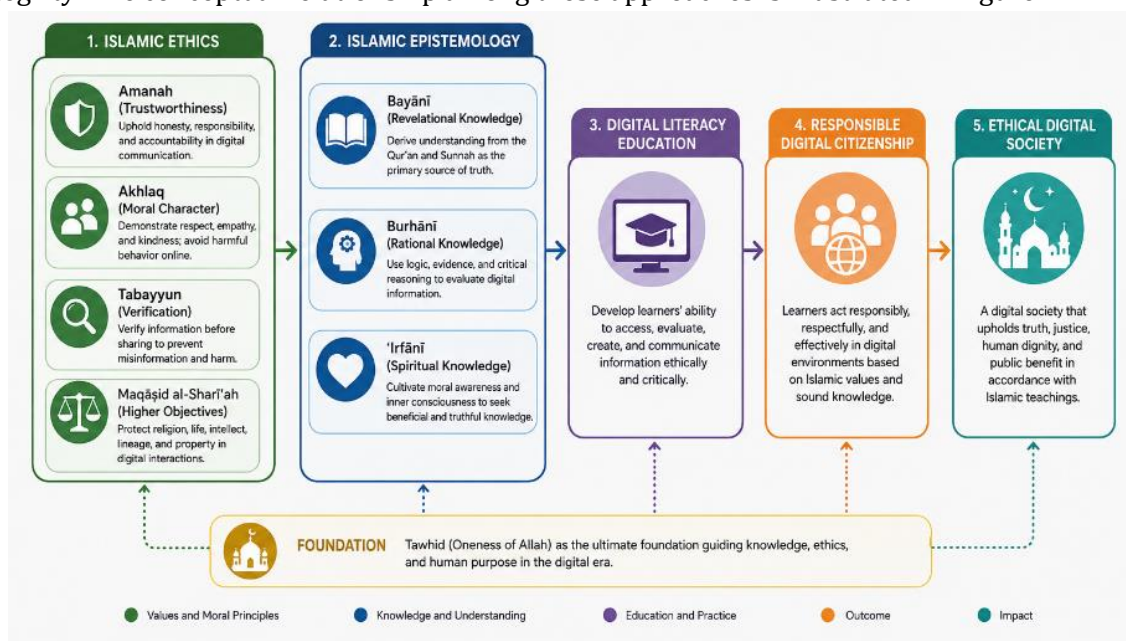


Figure 2. Islamic Epistemological Framework for Digital Information Verification

Integrating Islamic Ethics and Epistemology into Digital Literacy Education

The findings of this study demonstrate that Islamic ethics and Islamic epistemology provide complementary foundations for strengthening digital literacy education. Islamic ethics emphasizes the responsible use of information through the principles of *amanah*, *akhlaq*, *tabayyun*, and *Maqāṣid al-Sharīʿah*, while Islamic epistemology offers a systematic framework for evaluating the authenticity and credibility of digital information through three complementary approaches: *Bayānī*, *Burhānī*, and *ʿIrfānī*. Together, these perspectives foster ethical awareness,

critical thinking, and responsible decision-making, enabling learners to develop as responsible digital citizens.

The integration of these ethical and epistemological perspectives extends digital literacy beyond the acquisition of technical competencies. It encourages learners to combine moral responsibility with critical knowledge verification when accessing, evaluating, creating, and sharing digital information. Such an integrated approach enables students not only to recognize harmful digital content but also to respond to it thoughtfully, ethically, and responsibly. In the era of artificial intelligence, where digital content can be generated rapidly and disseminated widely, the integration of Islamic ethical values and epistemological reasoning becomes increasingly important for cultivating ethical awareness and critical digital literacy (Kumar et al., 2024).

Building upon these findings, this study proposes an integrated conceptual framework that combines Islamic ethical principles and Islamic epistemological approaches as complementary dimensions of digital literacy education. The framework positions ethical values as the moral foundation for responsible digital behavior, while epistemological principles provide a systematic process for evaluating the authenticity and credibility of digital information. Together, these dimensions support the development of critical thinking, ethical communication, and responsible digital citizenship within the context of Islamic education.

The integrated conceptual framework proposed in this study is presented in Figure 3.

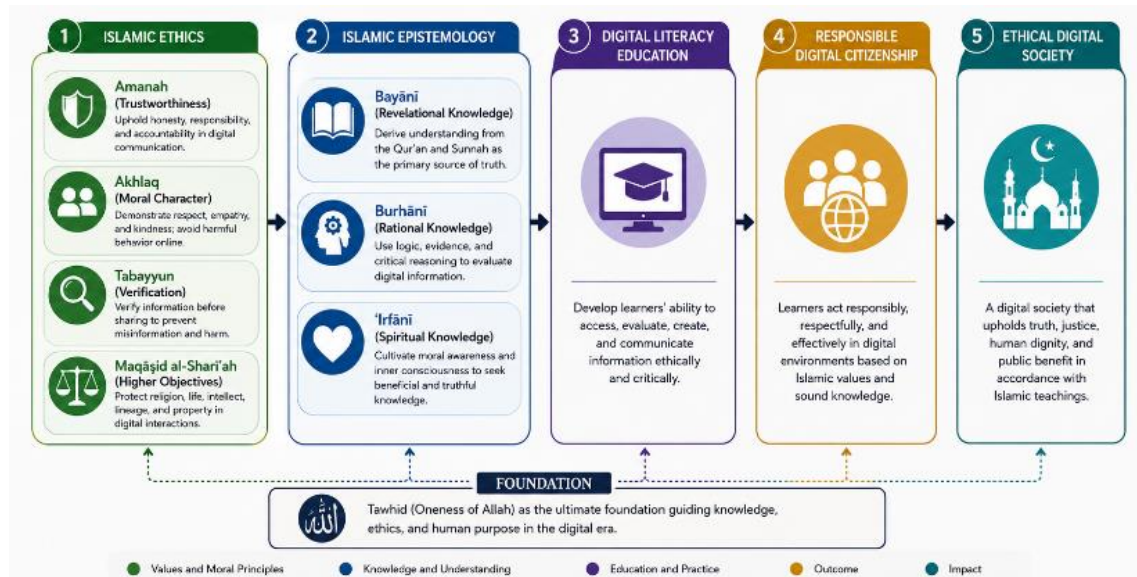


Figure 3. Integrated Framework of Islamic Ethics and Epistemology for Digital Literacy Education

Educational Implications for Islamic Education

The integrated framework proposed in this study has significant implications for Islamic education in the digital era. First, digital literacy should be systematically integrated into Islamic education curricula by combining technological competencies with Islamic ethical values and epistemological principles. Such integration enables students not only to develop digital skills but also to critically evaluate information, make responsible decisions, and apply Islamic values in their digital interactions (Mundiri et al., 2025; Sugito, 2024).

Second, teachers play a pivotal role in fostering responsible digital citizenship by incorporating the principles of *amanah*, *akhlaq*, *tabayyun*, and *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* into classroom instruction and digital learning activities. Beyond teaching technological competencies, educators

are expected to cultivate ethical awareness, critical thinking, and moral responsibility, enabling learners to navigate digital environments in accordance with Islamic values.

Third, the proposed framework offers practical guidance for educational leaders and policymakers in designing value-based digital literacy programs within Islamic educational institutions. Integrating Islamic ethical and epistemological perspectives into educational policies, curriculum development, and instructional practices can contribute to the development of responsible digital citizens who are capable of addressing the ethical challenges posed by contemporary digital technologies.

Finally, this study provides a foundation for future research on Islamic digital literacy and educational policy. Future studies may empirically examine the implementation and effectiveness of the proposed framework in schools, madrasahs, pesantren, and Islamic higher education institutions to evaluate its contribution to ethical digital behavior, critical digital literacy, and responsible digital citizenship among Muslim learners.

CONCLUSION

The rapid development of digital technology has significantly increased the spread of harmful digital content, making digital literacy education an essential component of contemporary Islamic education. This study demonstrates that Islamic ethical principles, including *amanah*, *akhlaq*, *tabayyun*, and *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah*, together with the Islamic epistemological approaches of *Bayānī*, *Burhānī*, and *'Irfānī*, provide a comprehensive foundation for addressing the ethical and epistemological challenges of digital communication. Rather than viewing digital literacy solely as a technological competency, this study highlights its role in fostering ethical awareness, critical thinking, and responsible digital citizenship grounded in Islamic educational values.

The principal contribution of this study is the development of an integrated conceptual framework that combines Islamic ethics and Islamic epistemology as complementary dimensions of digital literacy education. The framework demonstrates how ethical values provide moral guidance for responsible digital behavior, while epistemological principles strengthen learners' capacity to critically evaluate the authenticity and credibility of digital information. By integrating these complementary perspectives, the proposed framework offers a value-based approach to strengthening digital literacy education within Islamic educational contexts and contributes to the broader discourse on Islamic education in the digital society.

As a conceptual library research, this study is limited to the synthesis of existing literature and does not empirically examine the implementation of the proposed framework. Therefore, future studies are encouraged to validate and refine this framework through empirical research in madrasahs, pesantren, Islamic schools, and Islamic higher education institutions. Such investigations would provide valuable evidence regarding its effectiveness in promoting ethical digital behavior, critical digital literacy, and responsible digital citizenship among Muslim learners.

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