

Spiritual-Based Curriculum Enactment in Elementary Islamic Religious Education: Teachers' Perspectives from Demak, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

Digital transformation presents both pedagogical opportunities and ethical challenges for Islamic Religious Education (PAI), particularly in integrating technology with religious moderation, spiritual development, and moral formation. This study examined how elementary PAI teachers conceptualize and report enacting a spiritual-based curriculum and identified the conditions shaping its implementation. A qualitative descriptive design using inductive qualitative content analysis was employed. Data were obtained from open-ended questionnaire responses from 20 PAI teachers across 20 elementary schools in Demak Regency, Central Java, Indonesia. One hundred nonblank item-level responses were coded, categorized, and abstracted into themes. Descriptive counts were used to indicate thematic prevalence without implying statistical generalization. Six themes emerged: technology as a scaffold for religious meaning; an uneven transition from digital consumption to student production; dialogic and ethical approaches to *wasatiyyah*; tension between religious habituation and spiritual autonomy; relational modelling alongside contested disciplinary practices; and digital risks, teacher capacity, and an enactment gap between reported practices and proposed activities. The findings suggest that spiritual-based curriculum enactment depends less on technological sophistication than on teachers' ethical mediation, reflective pedagogy, relational modelling, and capacity to connect religious routines with meaningful reflection. The study proposes an integrated framework emphasizing ethical digital mediation, dialogic moral formation, reflective spiritual internalization, relational modelling, and ecological enactment capacity. Further research using classroom observations, interviews, documents, and pupil perspectives is needed to examine actual enactment and educational outcomes.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Digital transformation has become part of the everyday learning environment of elementary school learners in Indonesia. Through smartphones, video-sharing platforms, search engines, educational applications, and social media, children can access information and religious content beyond the temporal and spatial boundaries of the classroom. This development has changed not only how learners acquire information, but also how they interpret religious authority, communicate their beliefs, and connect religious teachings with everyday experience (Sindi Septia Hasnida et al., 2023). In Islamic Religious Education (*Pendidikan Agama Islam*, PAI), digital resources can support the presentation of religious concepts in more concrete, interactive, and contextually relevant ways. However, because elementary education is a formative stage in which children begin to develop moral orientations, patterns of reasoning, religious habits, and social attitudes, digital transformation must be addressed as both a pedagogical and a spiritual concern. PAI is therefore expected to help learners develop not only religious knowledge but also the ethical judgment and spiritual capacity required to navigate digital environments responsibly (Aningsih et al., 2022).

In this study, a spiritual-based curriculum is understood as an enacted curricular orientation that integrates Islamic values, reflective religious practice, moral reasoning, and spiritual self-regulation across learning objectives, content, pedagogy, assessment, classroom relationships, and school routines. It is not conceptualized as a separate subject or as the addition of ceremonial religious activities to the formal curriculum. Rather, it seeks to connect religious knowledge with worship, ethical action, reflective awareness, and responsibility in learners' daily lives (Alirahman et al., 2023). Spiritual self-regulation in this context refers to learners' developing capacity to make morally responsible choices, maintain religious commitments, and regulate their behavior based on internalized Islamic values rather than solely on external supervision. Such an orientation is consistent with holistic education, which regards intellectual, emotional, social, moral, and spiritual development as interconnected dimensions of the learner (Nugraha & Qodriani, 2024). It also reflects the Islamic educational ideal of *insan kamil*, namely the development of a complete person characterized by faith, knowledge, noble character, wisdom, justice, and social responsibility (Nurdalia, 2023).

Digital technology provides several pedagogical opportunities for implementing this curricular orientation in PAI. Multimedia stories, animations, audio recitations, interactive presentations, and virtual representations of religious practices can help elementary school learners understand concepts that may otherwise appear abstract. Guided online inquiry can introduce learners to diverse Islamic resources, while collaborative digital projects can connect religious teachings with contemporary issues such as environmental responsibility, respectful communication, helping others, and ethical behavior on social media. Teachers may also use digital reflection journals, scenario-based videos, and online discussion prompts to encourage learners to examine the moral consequences of everyday choices. When used purposefully, these resources can connect religious knowledge with learners' lived experiences and make spiritual learning more participatory and meaningful.

Nevertheless, the same digital environment also presents significant risks. Elementary school learners may encounter unverified religious information, decontextualized scriptural quotations, misleading religious claims, hostile online interactions, cyberbullying, and persuasive content generated through algorithmic recommendation systems (Muharom et al., 2024; Zaid et al., 2022). Children at the elementary level are still developing their capacity to evaluate sources and distinguish authoritative religious knowledge from persuasive online content, technological competence alone is insufficient. Thus, the central concern is not to assume that digitalization automatically produces a "value crisis," but to recognize that intellectual and technological competence does not necessarily guarantee ethical discernment or spiritual maturity (Hasan et al., 2023; Muflihini & Madrah, 2019; Sudarmin et al., 2023). This condition provides a direct rationale for implementing a spiritual-based curriculum that places technology within a clear moral and spiritual framework.

The implementation of such a curriculum requires teachers to coordinate three interrelated dimensions. The first is the pedagogically and theologically appropriate integration of digital technology.

An Islamic-oriented Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge approach requires teachers to align technological choices with the characteristics of PAI content, learners' developmental needs, and pedagogical objectives (Mawardi & Sukandar, 2025; Muflihin & Makhshun, 2020). Technology should not be selected merely because it is attractive or contemporary. Its use must support accurate theological understanding, reflective engagement, moral reasoning, and meaningful religious practice. For example, a video about prayer should not only demonstrate procedural movements but also help learners understand intention, humility, discipline, and the relationship between worship and daily conduct.

The second dimension concerns religious moderation or *wasatiyyah*. Digital media can expose learners to intolerant narratives, polarized opinions, identity-based hostility, and oversimplified interpretations of religious differences. Consequently, religious moderation cannot be taught only as declarative knowledge or as a list of acceptable attitudes. It needs to be enacted through classroom dialogue, empathy, fairness, respectful disagreement, social cooperation, and critical engagement with misleading or polarizing messages (Sulistiyoko et al., 2024). In elementary Islamic education, these values can be introduced through age-appropriate stories, moral dilemmas, collaborative activities, and guided discussions about diversity. Through these practices, learners can understand that religious commitment is compatible with respect, justice, compassion, and peaceful participation in a plural society.

The third dimension is the development of spiritual independence. Religious routines such as prayer, Qur'anic recitation, remembrance, and charitable practices remain important, but repetition alone does not necessarily result in the internalization of values. Teachers need to help learners understand the meaning of these practices, reflect on their personal relevance, and connect them with concrete moral behavior. Spiritual independence develops when learners gradually become capable of maintaining religious commitments, making ethical decisions, and regulating their actions even when teachers or parents are not directly supervising them (Mariana Amelda et al., 2024). Therefore, spiritual habituation needs to be accompanied by explanation, reflection, dialogue, role modelling, and opportunities to practice responsible decision-making.

Despite the conceptual relevance of these three dimensions, their integration in school practice remains challenging. Previous studies have reported constraints related to teachers' limited pedagogical preparation, unequal technological infrastructure, resistance to digital innovation, and the absence of implementation models that adequately reflect the distinctive aims of Islamic education (Khotimah et al., 2024). In some settings, digital technology is still used primarily to display learning materials, distribute assignments, or present information rather than to facilitate reflection, moral inquiry, collaborative meaning-making, and spiritual development (Mintasih et al., 2024). Religious moderation may be discussed as an isolated topic, while spiritual development may be limited to routine activities that are not consistently connected with classroom learning. These conditions indicate that the elementary challenge is not merely the availability of technology, but teachers' capacity to integrate technological, pedagogical, theological, moral, and developmental considerations into coherent curriculum practice.

Existing research also reveals an important gap. A substantial body of literature has examined digital technology in Islamic education, including its use as a learning medium, its contribution to student engagement, and the technological competence of Islamic education teachers. Other studies have separately discussed religious moderation, spiritual intelligence, religious habituation, and character education. However, relatively few studies have investigated how teachers integrate digital technology, religious moderation, and spiritual independence simultaneously within the enactment of a holistic spiritual-based curriculum. Furthermore, qualitative evidence from elementary Islamic education settings remains limited, particularly evidence that explains teachers' concrete strategies, the contextual challenges they experience, and their perceptions of how these practices contribute to learners' moral and spiritual development. Consequently, the relationship among these three dimensions has not been sufficiently explained through teachers' everyday curriculum practices.

To address this gap, this study aims to analyze how PAI teachers implement a spiritual-based curriculum by integrating digital technology, religious moderation, and spiritual independence in elementary education. More specifically, it seeks to identify the pedagogical strategies used by teachers,

examine the institutional and classroom-level challenges they encounter, and interpret the perceived contribution of these practices to holistic student development. The study seeks to formulate an empirically grounded framework for spiritual-based curriculum implementation. Rather than claiming a causal impact on student outcomes, this study offers a contextual explanation of teachers' practices and the conditions required to develop elementary school learners who are technologically capable, religiously moderate, ethically responsible, and spiritually self-regulated.

2. METHODS

The study employed a qualitative descriptive design and used inductive qualitative content analysis to examine teachers' written responses (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). Data were collected through a questionnaire on June 2025 and subsequently exported into a spreadsheet workbook for analysis. The verified analytical dataset comprised responses from 20 participants to five open-ended questions, yielding 100 nonblank item-level responses. The unit of analysis was each participant's complete written response to one questionnaire item. Multiple codes could be assigned to one item-level response when it addressed more than one relevant concept. The study examined teachers' reported practices and pedagogical perspectives rather than direct observations of classroom implementation or evidence of student outcomes.

The participants were 20 teachers affiliated with elementary-level educational institutions in Demak Regency, Central Java, Indonesia. Thirteen participants were affiliated with public elementary schools (SD/SDN), four with private or Islamic elementary schools other than MI and SDIT, two with madrasah ibtidaiyah (MI), and one with an integrated Islamic elementary school (SDIT). Participants are described as Islamic Religious Education teachers. Participants were anonymized using the codes T01–T20, and personal and institutional names were not linked to quotations.

Table 1. Participant profile by institutional setting

Institutional setting	Participants	Proportion
Public Elementary school (SD/SDN)	13	65%
Other private/Islamic Elementary school	4	20%
Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI)	2	10%
Integrated Islamic Elementary school (SDIT)	1	5%
Total	20	100%

The instrument consisted of five open-ended questions: (1) how technology was integrated into religious learning; (2) how teachers facilitated religious-moderation discussion; (3) how they encouraged students' spiritual independence; (4) how they responded to the challenges of teaching religion and spirituality in an advanced technological environment; and (5) how technology was involved in spiritual-development activities or projects. The open format produced answers ranging from brief statements to extended pedagogical proposals.

The data were analyzed using inductive qualitative content analysis. First, direct identifiers were removed and participant codes T01–T20 were assigned. Second, all 100 nonblank item-level responses were read repeatedly to support familiarization and initial descriptive coding. The initial codes captured technological media, pedagogical actions, spiritual objectives, moderation values, relational practices, perceived risks, and the stated status of implementation.

Third, codes were compared across participants and questionnaire items and were iteratively merged, separated, or refined into descriptive categories. Related categories were subsequently abstracted into broader interpretive themes. Category and theme definitions were checked against the original responses and discrepant cases, including answers indicating that no activity was currently implemented or that an activity represented only a proposal or future intention. Fourth, a cross-participant analytical matrix was used to document the participant code, questionnaire item, relevant excerpt, assigned code, category or theme, and implementation status. Each participant could contribute to more than one theme but was counted no more than once within the same theme, regardless of repeated mentions.

After the inductive categories and themes had been established, they were interpreted using the theoretical perspectives developed in the study's conceptual framework, including holistic curriculum, TPACK, digital religion, dialogic teaching, Self-Determination Theory, Social Cognitive Theory, restorative pedagogy, and ecological teacher agency. These theoretical perspectives were used for interpretive discussion rather than as predetermined coding categories. Numerical expressions such as "16 of 20 participants" function as descriptive indicators of how widely a category appeared across participants; they are not inferential statistics and do not demonstrate the effectiveness of the reported practices.

The analysis concerns adult teachers' written responses and does not include data collected directly from pupils. Names, school addresses, and other direct identifiers present in the exported workbook were excluded from analysis and reporting. Participant codes are used throughout, quotations omit identifying details, and translated excerpts preserve the substantive meaning of the original Indonesian text. The available dataset did not contain demographic attributes beyond institutional affiliation, so no sensitive characteristics were inferred.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. *Technology Integration in Spiritual-Based Islamic Education*

Technology appeared primarily as a representational and motivational scaffold. Sixteen of the 20 participants mentioned visual or audio-visual media, including video, images, PowerPoint, LCD projectors, audio, and film; 12 referred to online resources, applications, websites, YouTube, or social media. The pattern indicates that the most accessible entry point into digital PAI was the representation of content rather than the redesign of the learning process. Media were used to make prophetic history, ritual sequences, Qur'anic learning, and moral exemplars visible, audible, and easier to discuss.

"I use learning videos, for example videos about the stories of the ulul azmi prophets and Ashabul Kahfi."
(T04, translated from Indonesian)

T04's statement can be read through TPACK as an attempt to coordinate technological representation with the characteristics of religious content (Mishra & Koehler, 2006). Video can provide temporal sequence, setting, voice, and imagery that oral explanation alone may not offer. Nevertheless, the use of video does not by itself demonstrate integrated TPACK. Evidence of stronger integration would require clarity about the intended theological concept, the questions posed before and after viewing, how misconceptions were addressed, and how pupils translated the narrative into moral reasoning. The data therefore show an emerging technological-content connection, while the pedagogical depth remains only partially visible.

From a holistic-curriculum perspective, prophetic storytelling becomes educationally significant when it connects intellectual understanding with emotion, imagination, social responsibility, and spiritual self-reflection (Miller, 2007). If pupils merely remember plot details, the learning remains fragmented. If the teacher uses the story to examine intention, patience, justice, dependence on God, and present-day action, the same medium can connect subject knowledge with the learner's inner and communal life. Thus, the analytical issue is not whether video is religious, but which connections the pedagogy enables pupils to construct.

Teachers did not uniformly treat more technology as better. T15 linked projected stories with memory but simultaneously placed home use under adult supervision:

"When religious learning contains the story of a prophet, it is easier for children to remember. If children need to use a gadget at home, its use must be supervised by parents." (T15, translated from Indonesian)

T15's qualification is theoretically important because digital religion operates across classroom, home, media platform, and family authority rather than within a bounded online space (Campbell & Tsuria, 2021). Parental supervision is therefore not an external addition to digital pedagogy; it is part of the ecology through which children encounter religious messages. At the same time, supervision should move beyond limiting screen time. Adults also need to help pupils examine authorship, source credibility, commercial persuasion, emotional manipulation, and whether an online message represents the diversity and ethical depth of Islamic teaching.

Taken together, the data support the interpretation of technology as a scaffold whose educational value is conditional. It can increase accessibility and focus attention, but spiritual meaning is not contained automatically in a device or video. Meaning arises through the teacher's selection, framing, dialogue, follow-up activity, and modelling. Consequently, the frequency of multimedia use should be interpreted as evidence of adoption, not evidence of learning effectiveness or holistic transformation.

3.2. From Digital Consumption to Student Production: An Uneven Transition

Five participants explicitly mentioned students creating digital products. The clearest age-appropriate practices were short videos showing religious performance or communicating a simple moral message. T04 reported asking pupils "to make videos of the adhan, ablution, and correct prayer" (T04, translated from Indonesian). T13 described a home-school process in greater detail:

"The teacher gives pupils a task to make a short sermon video about religious values. At home, they are assisted by their parents; the video is then sent to the teacher and discussed together in class as reflection." (T13, translated from Indonesian)

Moving from viewing to production changes the pupil's epistemic role. The pupil must select content, sequence an explanation, demonstrate a practice, and anticipate an audience. Within TPACK, this represents more than the use of a tool because technology becomes part of the task design and the representation of PAI content (Mishra & Koehler, 2006). Yet production quality is not equivalent to religious understanding. A polished video can conceal imitation, inaccurate ritual details, or adult completion. Assessment must therefore prioritize conceptual accuracy, ethical intention, personal explanation, and reflection rather than editing sophistication.

T13's account also shows that digital production is socially distributed. Parental assistance can support the needs for relatedness and competence identified by Self-Determination Theory, especially when a child lacks technical confidence (Ryan & Deci, 2000). However, extensive adult control can reduce autonomy or obscure whose learning is represented. A more autonomy-supportive design would specify which decisions belong to the pupil, invite the pupil to explain choices orally, and use family participation as scaffolding rather than substitution.

Holistic curriculum theory further clarifies why the reflective classroom discussion after production matters. It reconnects the product with the pupil's experience, family, peers, religious practice, and ethical responsibility (Miller, 2007). Without this reflective return, production risks becoming an isolated performance. With it, a simple video about wudhu or a moral message can connect body, knowledge, community, and spiritual intention.

However, blogs, podcasts, online journals, meditation applications, and public digital da'wah were usually expressed as possibilities or recommendations rather than verified classroom practices. A particularly important principle came from T11:

"Technology is only a tool; the teacher must ensure that the activity still provides a deep, reflective, and meaningful experience for students' spiritual development." (T11, translated from Indonesian)

The low prevalence of verified student production and the abundance of conditional language should be interpreted through ecological teacher agency. Innovation depends not only on individual

willingness, but also on available time, confidence, task exemplars, safeguarding rules, assessment practices, family support, and institutional permission (Priestley et al., 2026). Aspirational responses therefore reveal both professional imagination and incomplete enactment conditions. They should not be classified as failure, but neither should they be reported as established implementation.

The implication is a staged progression: teachers may begin with guided viewing, move to jointly produced artifacts, and then allow increasingly independent production and reflection. Such progression aligns technological complexity with pupils' competence and autonomy while retaining theological accuracy and child protection.

3.3. *Wasatiyyah as Dialogic and Digital-Ethical Pedagogy*

Fifteen participants referred to moderation-related values such as tolerance, respect for difference, cooperation, or resistance to provocation, and 11 described discussion, argumentation, reflection, or an inclusive classroom climate. The difference between these counts suggests that teachers more readily articulated the moral vocabulary of moderation than the pedagogical process through which pupils learn to reason with it. Several participants nevertheless described listening rules, equal participation, multiple perspectives, cases, and guided conclusions. T05 emphasized psychological safety:

"Make the classroom a safe and inclusive environment, where all students feel valued and can share their views without fear of punishment or persecution." (T05, translated from Indonesian)

T05's emphasis corresponds to the supportive dimension of dialogic teaching: pupils need relational security before they will expose uncertainty or reconsider a view. However, Alexander's framework shows that safety is necessary but insufficient (Alexander, 2020). Productive dialogue must also be collective, reciprocal, cumulative, and purposeful. In PAI, this means that the teacher does not merely permit different opinions, but helps pupils listen for reasons, connect one contribution to another, test claims against ethical and religious principles, and reach a provisional understanding appropriate to their developmental level.

T13 connected this dialogic climate with critical reasoning by proposing equal opportunities to speak, different problems for pupils to examine, and a shared conclusion that religious difference should be respected and that pupils should not be easily provoked. This sequence moves *wasatiyyah* from a declarative value to an intellectual and relational practice. Equality of voice enacts justice; examining different problems develops perspective-taking; and the jointly constructed conclusion links dialogue with responsible action.

Digital ethics was also explicit. T15 warned that technology can be used "to spread hatred among religious communities" and argued that pupils require guidance in using it well (T15, translated from Indonesian). Campbell's account of digital religion helps interpret this concern: online religious communication does not simply transmit pre-existing belief but reshapes authority, belonging, visibility, and conflict (Campbell & Tsuria, 2021). Consequently, *wasatiyyah* in the digital era includes learning who is speaking, how an algorithm amplifies a message, what emotional response it seeks, which voices are excluded, and how to respond without reproducing hostility.

This theoretical reading also guards against reducing moderation to passive agreement or relativism. Dialogic *wasatiyyah* permits principled disagreement while requiring fairness, evidence, restraint, and recognition of human dignity. For elementary pupils, teachers should use familiar and low-risk cases, such as exclusion, insulting language, forwarding an unverified message, or unequal group participation, rather than exposing children directly to extremist material.

The data therefore support a two-layer model of moderation pedagogy: a relational layer that establishes safety and respect, and an epistemic layer that develops verification, reason-giving, perspective-taking, and ethical judgement. The 15-to-11 difference indicates that professional learning is especially needed at the second layer, where values are translated into teachable dialogic routines.

3.4. *Spiritual Independence Between Habituation and Reflection*

Thirteen participants mentioned recurring religious practices such as prayer, Qur'anic reading, Asmaul Husna, short surahs, or congregational worship, while eight referred to reflection, journaling, self-monitoring, or related practices. T04 described an established routine that included "Asmaul Husna, Juz Amma recitation, Surah Yasin, Surah al-Mulk, tahlil, dhuha prayer, and congregational zuhr prayer" (T04, translated from Indonesian). In the SDIT context, T15 similarly reported greetings, prayer before and after lessons, daily memorization, Qur'anic learning, dhuha prayer, and congregational zuhr prayer.

These routines create a temporal and communal structure for spiritual life. From a holistic perspective, embodied repetition can connect cognition, emotion, body, community, and transcendence (Miller, 2007). The educational potential lies in allowing a practice to become part of how pupils perceive and organize daily life. Yet frequency and institutional regularity cannot show whether pupils understand, value, or personally appropriate the practice. A routine may be meaningful participation, social conformity, or mere task completion; the questionnaire cannot determine which interpretation predominates.

The more autonomy-oriented accounts attempted to transfer responsibility from external monitoring to the learner. T17 proposed an "Honesty Book" in which pupils would record religious activities themselves and discuss the record periodically:

"There would be no punishment, only motivation and appreciation, so that pupils perform worship not because of pressure but because of their own desire." (T17, translated from Indonesian)

Self-Determination Theory provides a precise vocabulary for interpreting this aspiration. Behaviour may be externally regulated by reward or punishment, introjected through guilt and pressure, identified as personally valuable, or more fully integrated with one's sense of self (Ryan & Deci, 2000). T17 explicitly seeks movement away from external control. However, removing punishment does not automatically create autonomy. If the book becomes surveillance, comparison, or a requirement to display piety, controlled motivation may persist in subtler form. Autonomy support requires meaningful choice, non-humiliating feedback, acknowledgement of difficulty, and opportunities for pupils to articulate why a practice matters.

Competence and relatedness are equally relevant. Pupils need attainable steps and feedback that help them experience growth, while relationships with teachers, peers, and family can make spiritual practice feel supported rather than policed. A reflective conference about a worship log should therefore ask about meaning, obstacles, feelings, and next steps, not only whether a box is checked. This converts monitoring into guided self-regulation.

Other accounts used a conventional worship-activity book or daily teacher questioning (T14). The contrast is analytically important because identical instruments can serve different motivational climates. A log used for compliance reinforces external regulation; the same log used for honest reflection may support identified or integrated motivation. The decisive variable is not the book itself but the pedagogical relationship and purpose surrounding it.

Spiritual independence should consequently be defined as reflective and relational internalization, not solitary performance without assistance. It develops when habituation supplies continuity, explanation supplies understanding, dialogue supplies meaning, and gradually transferred responsibility supplies agency. This interpretation deepens the notion of spiritual intelligence by specifying the motivational process through which practice may become self-endorsed (Maryam, 2023; Ryan & Deci, 2000).

3.5. Relational Modelling and the Ambiguity of Spiritual Discipline

Eleven participants emphasized mentoring, modelling, parental involvement, or personal guidance. T01 described approaching pupils individually, speaking “from the heart,” and giving concrete examples of spiritual life. T15 likewise foregrounded teacher modelling:

“As teachers, we must be careful in our actions and words in front of pupils because children directly observe the example set by their teacher.” (T15, translated from Indonesian)

Social Cognitive Theory explains why the teacher’s conduct operates as curriculum. Pupils learn not only from explicit instruction but by attending to models, retaining observed patterns, attempting them, and interpreting their consequences (Bandura, 1986). When a teacher responds patiently to disagreement, verifies a digital claim, speaks respectfully, or admits an error, the pupil observes how Islamic values organize action. Modelling is therefore especially important for values that cannot be reduced to factual recall.

However, observation does not guarantee internalization. Pupils may imitate a respected teacher in school without transferring the conduct to other settings. Reflection and guided practice are needed to help them name the value, understand the reason, anticipate consequences, and exercise it independently. T01’s heart-to-heart approach contributes this interpretive layer. In Self-Determination Theory, a relationship characterized by care and listening supports relatedness, which can facilitate the internalization of social and moral expectations (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

The responses were not uniformly humanistic. T09 reported that when pupils used rude language, they were required to write *istighfar* 100 times and stated that the behaviour subsequently decreased:

“If a child speaks rudely, the child has to write istighfar one hundred times.” (T09, translated from Indonesian)

The claim of reduced misbehaviour describes an observable behavioural change, but it does not establish moral understanding, remorse, or transfer beyond the classroom. Restorative pedagogy distinguishes social engagement from social control and asks how responsibility, relationship, and repair are developed after harm (Morrison & Vaandering, 2012). Repetitive writing is primarily a control strategy because it does not necessarily invite the pupil to understand whom the language harmed, listen to the affected person, repair the relationship, or plan a different response.

The religious form of the sanction adds a further ethical concern. *Istighfar* is a devotional act oriented toward awareness of wrongdoing and return to God. When it is mechanically imposed as a quantity, pupils may learn to associate remembrance with humiliation or aversion. This does not mean that repentance has no place in discipline; rather, repentance should be connected with sincere acknowledgement, empathy, restitution, and changed conduct. A restorative sequence might include calming, naming the harmful words, hearing their impact, apologizing, repairing harm, identifying the relevant Islamic value, and choosing a future strategy.

The contrast between relational mentoring and spiritualized punishment is therefore not a minor inconsistency but a boundary test for spiritual pedagogy. Holistic education requires congruence between the value taught and the means used to teach it. Discipline intended to cultivate mercy, dignity, and responsibility must embody those same qualities in its process.

3.6. Digital Risks, Teacher Capacity, and the Enactment Gap

Fifteen participants mentioned risks or the need for wise and bounded technology use. The concerns included gaming-related language, excessive phone use, online hatred, unverified information, divided attention, and reduced reflection. T11 offered the most differentiated diagnosis:

“The challenges include divided attention, easy access to information that cannot always be verified, and dependence on technology that may obscure reflection and contemplation.” (T11, translated from Indonesian)

These concerns should not be interpreted as evidence that technology is inherently opposed to spirituality. Digital-religion theory suggests that platforms reorganize the conditions under which religious authority, community, attention, and practice are formed (Campbell & Tsuria, 2021). The risk is relational and epistemic as much as technical: pupils may encounter persuasive speakers without contextual knowledge, repeated messages that appear true because they are amplified, and entertainment logics that reward speed and emotion over contemplation. The corresponding curriculum response is critical mediation, not blanket rejection.

Teacher capacity also emerged. T07 argued that “teachers’ human resources must be improved” and that teachers need technological competence, creativity, and solidarity (T07, translated from Indonesian). TPACK clarifies that capacity involves more than operating an application. Teachers need to understand how a technology changes the representation of PAI content, which pedagogies it enables or constrains, what misconceptions it may produce, and how it interacts with pupils’ developmental characteristics (Mishra & Koehler, 2006). Ethical-spiritual discernment must be added to these knowledge domains because technically functional content can still be unreliable, coercive, developmentally unsuitable, or spiritually superficial.

Ecological teacher-agency theory prevents this capacity issue from being individualized. Agency is achieved through the interaction of personal histories, professional beliefs, future aspirations, relationships, cultural expectations, material resources, and institutional structures (Priestley et al., 2026). A teacher may value digital projects but lack planning time, exemplars, parental agreements, assessment criteria, or safeguarding policy. Conversely, available devices do not guarantee agency if the institutional culture rewards only content coverage and compliance.

Two responses made the enactment gap explicit: T02 stated that no spiritual-independence project had yet been provided, while T12 answered, “For now, there is none,” when asked about a strategy for contemporary challenges. Numerous answers also used conditional or future-oriented language. These statements are analytically valuable because they distinguish a professional repertoire of imagined possibilities from routines actually embedded in practice. Curriculum implementation is therefore better represented as a continuum of awareness, intention, trial, stabilization, and institutionalization than as a yes-or-no category.

Respondents did not provide sufficiently concrete evidence of unequal internet access, missing devices, or infrastructure shortages. Infrastructure may matter, but it cannot be claimed as an empirical result from this dataset. This absence illustrates the principle of evidentiary restraint: theory and previous research may identify plausible conditions, while the present findings must remain bounded by what participants actually reported.

The practical implication is that professional development should combine design rehearsal with ecological support. Teachers need opportunities to critique digital religious content, redesign one existing lesson, test an age-appropriate production task, analyze pupil responses, and discuss ethical dilemmas with colleagues. School leaders must complement this learning with time, policy, parental communication, and safeguarding structures that allow emerging agency to become sustained enactment.

Table 2. Data-grounded thematic summary

Theme	Descriptive prevalence	Illustrative evidence	Analytic qualification
Visual/audio-visual integration	16/20	Videos, images, PowerPoint, LCD, audio, films	Reported usefulness; no measured learning effect
Online resources	12/20	Websites, YouTube, applications, social media	Requires source verification and adult mediation

Theme	Descriptive prevalence	Illustrative evidence	Analytic qualification
Student digital production	5/20	Worship videos and short sermon videos	Advanced platforms mostly proposed, not verified
Moderation values	15/20	Tolerance, respect, cooperation, non-provocation	Values were more common than detailed enactment
Dialogic moderation	11/20	Safe discussion, equal voice, cases, reflection	Self-reported pedagogy; pupil reasoning not measured
Religious habituation	13/20	Prayer, Qur'anic reading, Asmaul Husna, worship logs	May support continuity or reproduce compliance
Reflection/self-monitoring	8/20	Reflection, journals, Honesty Book, self-report	Some practices remained aspirational
Mentoring/modelling	11/20	Personal dialogue, teacher example, family support	Coexists with a punitive spiritual practice
Digital risk/ethical caution	15/20	Distraction, unverified information, gaming language, hatred	Dominant barrier was pedagogical-ethical, not infrastructural

3.7. Integrated Analytical Framework and Practical Implications

The study contributes a provisional analytical framework of spiritual-based curriculum enactment with four mutually dependent processes: ethical mediation of digital content, dialogic formation of moral judgement, reflective internalization of religious practice, and relational modelling of values. A fifth element, ecological enactment capacity, conditions all four. It explains why teachers with similar aspirations may report different levels of implementation and why isolated training in tools is unlikely to produce sustainable change.

The model connects theories that are often used separately. TPACK explains the knowledge intersection required to design technology-supported PAI (Mishra & Koehler, 2006); holistic curriculum explains the connections that prevent spiritual formation from becoming fragmented (Miller, 2007); dialogic teaching explains the classroom interaction needed for moderation and moral reasoning (Alexander, 2020); Self-Determination Theory explains how routines may become internalized (Ryan & Deci, 2000); Social Cognitive Theory explains modelling (Bandura, 1986); and ecological teacher agency explains the transition from aspiration to enactment (Priestley et al., 2026). The novelty lies in showing how these mechanisms operate together around teachers' accounts of one curriculum problem.

This synthesis also refines the meaning of "spiritual-based curriculum." It is not a collection of religious activities, nor a technological package with Islamic content. It is a pattern of curriculum decisions through which knowledge, media, dialogue, habit, relationship, and institutional support are aligned toward reflective spiritual agency. The concept therefore has observable dimensions that future studies can examine rather than treating spirituality as an abstract aspiration.

For practice, schools should curate trustworthy and age-appropriate PAI resources; teach simple verification and respectful digital communication; favour short supervised productions over premature public posting; connect religious routines with reflection and ethical action; establish privacy and parental safeguards; replace mechanical spiritual punishment with restorative accountability; and provide teacher learning that integrates technological, pedagogical, theological, motivational, and child-development knowledge. Leaders should also provide planning time, peer review of lesson designs, shared rubrics, and ethical protocols so that teacher agency is institutionally supported.

3.8. Limitations and Future Research

The study has several limitations. The data consist of one online open-ended questionnaire completed by 20 teachers in one regency, so the findings are context-bound. Responses varied substantially in length and specificity, and several were framed as recommendations or future intentions. The instrument did not record teacher experience, grade level, subject role, or other demographic

information that could explain variation. There were no follow-up interviews, observations, curriculum documents, pupil data, or outcome measures. Self-reported practices and perceived usefulness therefore cannot establish implementation fidelity, causal influence, or effectiveness.

The descriptive prevalence counts require particular caution. A theme mentioned by many participants is not necessarily more educationally important than a rare but conceptually significant discrepant case, such as spiritualized punishment. Counts also do not measure frequency or quality of classroom enactment. Translation may reduce nuances of Indonesian religious and pedagogical language, although excerpts were checked against the source. Finally, the theory-informed interpretation was conducted by a single researcher; an independent coder or participant validation could strengthen analytic credibility.

Future qualitative research should use maximum-variation sampling, follow-up interviews, classroom observation, lesson-plan analysis, and pupil artifacts to distinguish intended, enacted, experienced, and learned curriculum. Video-based observation would be particularly useful for examining whether moderation dialogue is genuinely reciprocal and cumulative, while longitudinal pupil interviews could investigate how routines are internalized.

The integrated theoretical model also generates propositions for mixed-method testing. Studies could examine whether autonomy-supportive reflection mediates the relationship between habituation and spiritual self-regulation; whether dialogic quality predicts moral reasoning in digital cases; whether source-evaluation competence moderates the effects of digital PAI projects; and whether school-level support strengthens the relationship between teacher TPACK and sustained implementation. These propositions go beyond what the current data demonstrate, but they provide a cumulative agenda grounded in the qualitative findings.

4. CONCLUSION

This study shows that teachers conceptualize spiritual-based curriculum implementation through technology-mediated religious learning, dialogic *wasatiyyah*, religious habituation, reflective self-monitoring, and relational modelling. The dominant pattern was not technological sophistication but ethical mediation: teachers selected visual and online resources, framed their meaning, placed limits on use, and connected them with worship, character, and social respect. The evidence also reveals important tensions between consumption and production, routine and autonomy, aspiration and enactment, and humanistic guidance and spiritualized punishment. These tensions make implementation a process of professional and ethical judgment rather than the mechanical addition of technology to PAI.

Practically, age-appropriate digital projects, source verification, structured moderation dialogue, reflective habituation, teacher modelling, parental involvement, and non-coercive discipline should be developed together. Because the findings derive from self-reported written responses from 20 teachers, they do not demonstrate effects on pupils. Further research combining interviews, observation, document and artifact analysis, and longitudinal measures is needed to determine how these practices shape pupils' digital spiritual literacy, moral reasoning, and spiritual independence.

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