

Transforming Islamic Religious Education Learning through 21st-Century Skills: A Systematic Literature Review

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ABSTRACT

The transformation of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) has become increasingly important in responding to the demands of 21st-century education, which requires learners to develop critical thinking, creativity, communication, collaboration, and strong moral character. Although previous studies have examined pedagogical innovation, digital technology integration, and character education in PAI, the existing literature remains fragmented, with limited integrative synthesis of these dimensions within Islamic educational contexts. This study aims to synthesize current evidence on the transformation of PAI and develop an integrative conceptual framework that supports the development of 21st-century competencies. A Systematic Literature Review (SLR) based on the PRISMA 2020 guidelines was conducted. Following the identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion process, 25 peer-reviewed articles published between 2020 and 2025 were selected for qualitative synthesis. The review demonstrates that effective PAI transformation is achieved through the integration of three interrelated dimensions: pedagogical innovation, digital technology, and character education grounded in Islamic values. Rather than functioning independently, these dimensions interact synergistically to create adaptive, student-centered, and contextually relevant learning environments that foster both academic competence and religious character while strengthening students' 21st-century skills. This study contributes by proposing an integrative conceptual framework for PAI transformation aligned with 21st-century competencies. The framework provides a comprehensive synthesis that bridges pedagogy, technology, and Islamic character education, offering theoretical insights and practical guidance for curriculum development and instructional practice in contemporary Islamic education.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The rapid transformation of the global educational landscape in the twenty-first century has fundamentally reshaped expectations regarding the competencies required of learners. The emergence of Industry 4.0, Society 5.0, globalization, and digital technologies has shifted educational priorities from knowledge transmission toward the development of higher-order competencies, including critical thinking, creativity, communication, collaboration, digital literacy, and lifelong learning (OECD, 2021; World Economic Forum, 2020). Consequently, educational institutions are expected to prepare students who are not only academically competent but also capable of adapting to rapidly changing social, technological, and professional environments.

These developments have significant implications for Islamic Education (PAI), which has traditionally focused on transmitting religious knowledge and fostering students' moral and spiritual development. While these objectives remain fundamental, PAI is increasingly expected to cultivate competencies that enable students to participate effectively in contemporary society without compromising Islamic values. Therefore, the transformation of PAI requires a balanced approach that integrates competency-based learning with the preservation of ethical and spiritual principles (Halstead, 2021; Al-Attas, 2020).

Despite curriculum reforms introduced in many educational systems, the implementation of PAI in numerous schools continues to rely predominantly on conventional instructional approaches characterized by teacher-centered learning, lecture-based delivery, and memorization-oriented assessment (Putra, 2024; Lestari et al., 2023). Such approaches are generally effective in facilitating the acquisition of religious knowledge but provide limited opportunities for students to develop higher-order thinking skills, problem-solving abilities, creativity, and collaborative learning experiences required in contemporary education.

Although several studies have reported gradual improvements through competency-based curriculum implementation, empirical findings remain inconsistent. Some researchers argue that instructional innovations have begun to promote more active learning environments, whereas others conclude that these changes have not yet been implemented systematically due to limited pedagogical capacity, institutional readiness, and instructional resources (Sutrisno, 2023; Hidayat, 2022; Rahman, 2023). This inconsistency indicates that the transformation of PAI remains an ongoing challenge requiring more comprehensive pedagogical reform.

The rapid advancement of digital technology has created unprecedented opportunities to transform learning environments across educational disciplines, including Islamic Education. Digital platforms, learning management systems, interactive multimedia, artificial intelligence, and online collaborative environments provide opportunities to create more flexible, personalized, and student-centered learning experiences (Hodges et al., 2020; Bond et al., 2021). At the same time, pedagogical innovations such as blended learning, flipped classrooms, project-based learning, and inquiry-based learning have demonstrated considerable potential for improving student engagement, motivation, and learning outcomes (Graham, 2021; Bishop & Verleger, 2020).

However, previous studies present differing perspectives regarding the effectiveness of technology integration. While numerous studies report positive impacts of digital technologies on student participation and learning engagement, other researchers emphasize that technological adoption alone does not necessarily improve educational quality unless accompanied by appropriate pedagogical innovation and teachers' digital competence (Redecker, 2020; Selwyn, 2021; Koehler et al., 2020). These findings suggest that successful transformation in PAI requires not merely technological adoption but also pedagogical redesign that aligns digital learning with meaningful educational objectives.

Beyond cognitive and technological competencies, twenty-first-century education increasingly recognizes the importance of character development, ethical reasoning, social responsibility, and emotional intelligence. In this context, Islamic Education possesses a distinctive advantage because its educational philosophy inherently integrates intellectual, moral, and spiritual dimensions.

Consequently, PAI has considerable potential to cultivate students who are academically competent while maintaining strong Islamic character and ethical responsibility (Elias, 2021; Fullan, 2020).

Nevertheless, balancing competency development with character education remains a significant challenge. Existing literature suggests that instructional innovation should not prioritize technological advancement at the expense of Islamic values. Instead, educational transformation should harmoniously integrate pedagogical innovation, digital technology, and Islamic character education to support students' holistic development (Campbell, 2021; Holmes et al., 2022). Such integration enables PAI to remain relevant within contemporary educational contexts while preserving its distinctive religious identity.

Previous studies have increasingly examined various aspects of Islamic Education transformation, including innovative pedagogical approaches, digital technology integration, and character education. However, the existing body of literature remains fragmented across these three dimensions. Some studies primarily focus on instructional innovation, whereas others emphasize educational technology or Islamic character development independently. Consequently, limited research has provided an integrative synthesis explaining how pedagogical innovation, digital transformation, and Islamic character education collectively contribute to the development of twenty-first-century competencies within PAI contexts. Furthermore, systematic literature review studies that comprehensively synthesize empirical evidence across these interconnected dimensions remain relatively scarce.

In response to these limitations, this study aims to synthesize the existing literature concerning the transformation of Islamic Education toward twenty-first-century learning through a Systematic Literature Review (SLR). Specifically, this study seeks to integrate evidence regarding pedagogical innovation, educational technology, and Islamic character education into a unified conceptual understanding of PAI transformation. Unlike previous studies that predominantly examine these dimensions separately, this review proposes an integrative framework that explains their interrelationships and their collective contribution to developing critical thinking, creativity, communication, collaboration, and Islamic character within contemporary Islamic Education. By providing a comprehensive and evidence-based synthesis, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of how Islamic Education can effectively respond to the evolving demands of twenty-first-century education while maintaining its fundamental religious values.

2. METHODS

2.1 Research Design

This study employed a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) following the PRISMA 2020 (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) guidelines to systematically identify, screen, evaluate, and synthesize relevant studies on the transformation of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in developing students' 21st-century competencies (Page et al., 2021). The review process consisted of five sequential stages: (1) formulation of research questions, (2) systematic literature search, (3) study screening and eligibility assessment, (4) quality appraisal, and (5) thematic synthesis of the selected studies (Kitchenham, 2020; Snyder, 2019).

2.2 Search Strategy

The literature search was conducted between March and April 2026 using three academic databases: Scopus, Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ), and Google Scholar. These databases were selected to ensure comprehensive coverage of peer-reviewed international and open-access publications relevant to Islamic Education. The search strategy employed Boolean operators to maximize retrieval accuracy using the following search string:

("Islamic Religious Education" OR "Islamic Education" OR "PAI")

AND

(transformation OR innovation OR pedagogy)

AND

("21st-century skills" OR "critical thinking" OR creativity OR communication OR collaboration OR "student skills")

The search was limited to peer-reviewed journal articles published between 2020 and 2025 and written in English.

2.3 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Articles were included if they:

- a. focused on the transformation of Islamic Religious Education (PAI);
- b. discussed pedagogical innovation, educational technology, character education, or 21st-century competencies;
- c. were published in peer-reviewed journals between 2020 and 2025;
- d. employed clear and rigorous research methodologies; and
- e. provided empirical or conceptual evidence relevant to the research objectives.

Studies were excluded if they:

- a. were conference abstracts, book reviews, editorials, or dissertations;
- b. lacked sufficient methodological information;
- c. were not directly related to Islamic Religious Education; or
- d. duplicated publications already identified in other databases.

2.4 Quality Appraisal

Each eligible study underwent a quality appraisal based on four criteria: (1) relevance to the research objectives, (2) methodological rigor, (3) clarity of findings, and (4) contribution to the transformation of Islamic Religious Education. Only studies meeting these quality criteria were retained for the final synthesis.

2.5 Data Analysis

The selected articles were analyzed using thematic analysis. Initially, all studies were read comprehensively to identify recurring concepts and research findings. Open coding was then conducted to generate preliminary codes, which were subsequently grouped through axial coding into broader thematic categories. Finally, selective coding was employed to synthesize the findings into three overarching themes:

1. Pedagogical Innovation;
2. Digital Technology Integration; and
3. Islamic Character Education.

These themes emerged inductively from recurring patterns identified across the selected studies and formed the basis for developing the proposed conceptual framework. The coding and thematic synthesis were conducted manually using Microsoft Excel, as the study focused on qualitative synthesis rather than bibliometric mapping.

2.6 Study Selection Process

The study selection followed the PRISMA 2020 workflow consisting of identification, screening, eligibility assessment, and inclusion stages.

a. Identification

- Records identified through database searching (Scopus, Google Scholar, and DOAJ): n = 120
- Additional records identified through manual searching: n = 15

b. Screening

- Records after duplicate removal: n = 110
- Records screened based on title and abstract: n = 80

- Records excluded: n = 30
 - c. Eligibility**
 - Full-text articles assessed for eligibility: n = 50
 - Full-text articles excluded for not meeting the inclusion criteria: n = 30
 - d. Included**
 - Studies included in the final qualitative synthesis: n = 20
- The complete article selection process is illustrated in Table 1:

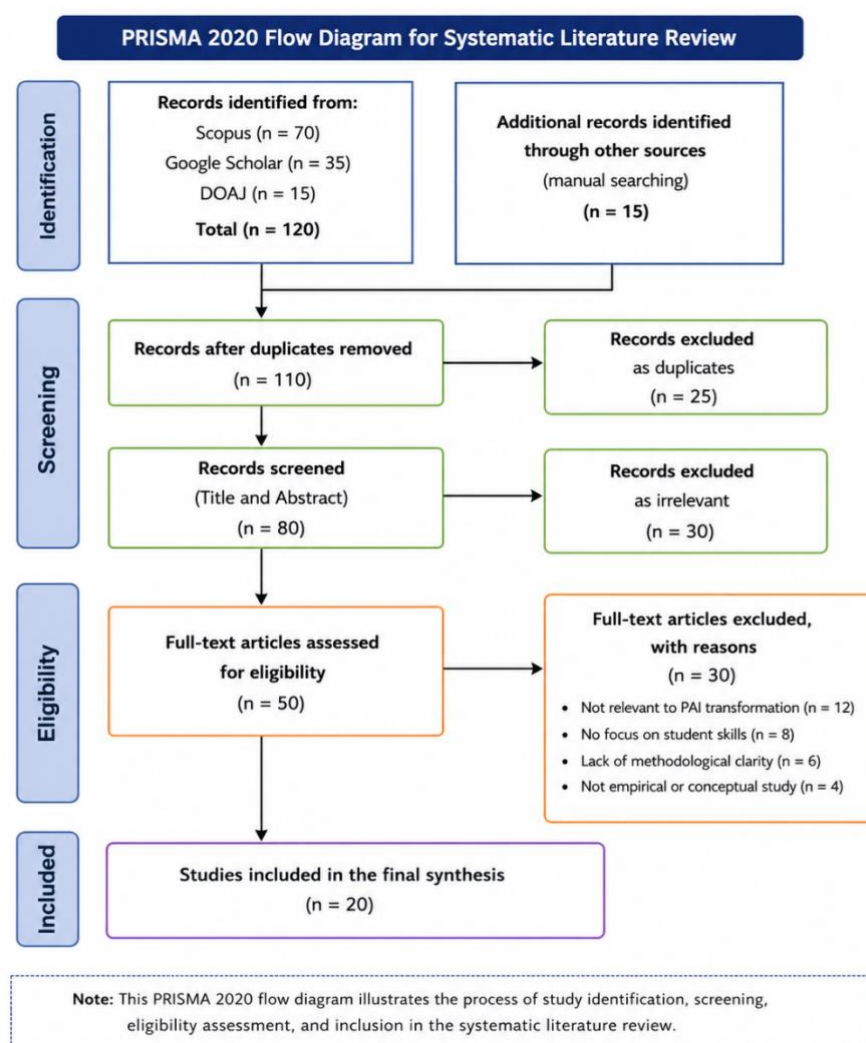


Table 1. PRISMA Flow Diagram

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Findings

Before presenting the synthesis table, it is important to highlight the overall characteristics of the reviewed studies. The final dataset comprised 20 peer-reviewed articles published between 2020 and 2025, representing diverse methodological approaches and thematic perspectives on the transformation of Islamic Religious Education (PAI). The studies collectively examine pedagogical innovation, digital technology integration, character education, curriculum transformation, and teacher professionalism, providing a comprehensive understanding of how PAI is responding to the demands of 21st-century education.

The reviewed literature demonstrates three notable patterns. First, research on PAI transformation has increased steadily since 2022, reflecting growing scholarly attention to educational innovation following the acceleration of digital learning during the post-pandemic period. Second, most studies investigate only a single dimension of transformation—either pedagogy, educational technology, or character education—while relatively few adopt an integrative perspective. Third, there is a clear shift from traditional teacher-centered instruction toward more student-centered, competency-based learning environments.

Methodologically, the reviewed studies are dominated by qualitative approaches, followed by literature reviews, conceptual studies, experimental research, mixed-methods, survey, and descriptive research. This distribution indicates that research on PAI transformation remains predominantly exploratory, with relatively limited empirical intervention studies. The thematic distribution further reveals that pedagogical innovation is the most frequently investigated topic, followed by digital technology integration, character education, curriculum development, and teacher professionalism.

Table 2. The characteristics of the 20 studies included in this systematic review

No.	Author(s) & Year	Research Focus	Method	Key Findings
1	Hidayat (2022)	Transformation of PAI	Qualitative	PAI must adapt to the digital era
2	Rahman (2023)	PAI and 21st-century skills	Conceptual	Critical thinking skills are enhanced
3	Lestari et al. (2023)	Innovative learning models	Experimental	Problem-Based Learning improves students' analytical skills
4	Yusuf et al. (2022)	Digital learning	Survey	Learning Management Systems increase student engagement
5	Dewi (2024)	Innovation in PAI	Qualitative	Integration of character education and technology is essential
6	Putra (2024)	Challenges in PAI	Descriptive	Implementation barriers remain significant
7	Anwar & Hidayat (2023)	Technology in PAI	Mixed-methods	Digital media are effective in learning
8	Fauzan (2023)	Student-centered learning	Experimental	Enhances student participation
9	Suyadi & Widodo (2021)	Neuroscience in PAI	Literature review	Learning becomes more effective
10	Ismail (2022)	Technology integration	Qualitative	Learning becomes more interactive
11	Zubaidah (2020)	21st-century skills	Review	4C skills are essential
12	Rahim (2022)	Character education	Qualitative	Religious values are strengthened
13	Sutrisno (2023)	21st-century education	Conceptual	Instructional innovation is required
14	Kolb (2022)	Experiential learning	Theoretical	Experience-based learning is effective
15	Snyder (2021)	SLR methodology	Review	SLR ensures systematic and valid synthesis
16	Kitchenham (2020)	SLR methodology	Review	Standardized SLR procedures are essential
17	Azra (2021)	Modernization of PAI	Literature review	Curriculum adaptation is necessary
18	Muhaimin (2020)	PAI curriculum	Literature review	Integration of values and knowledge is crucial
19	Nata (2021)	PAI management	Literature review	Strengthening educational systems is needed
20	Widodo (2022)	Teacher professionalism	Qualitative	Teachers must be innovative

The synthesis presented in Table 1 reveals three major patterns. First, pedagogical innovation remains the dominant focus, with most studies emphasizing student-centered learning strategies to promote higher-order thinking skills. Second, digital technology has emerged as an important enabling factor for improving learning engagement, although its implementation is constrained by teachers' digital competence and institutional readiness. Third, character education consistently remains the distinguishing feature of PAI; however, it is commonly examined separately from pedagogical and technological innovation. These findings indicate that the existing literature remains fragmented despite sharing a common objective of improving students' 21st-century competencies.

Table 3. Distribution of Reviewed Studies by Research Characteristics

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Qualitative	6	30%
Experimental	2	10%
Mixed Methods	1	5%
Literature Review	5	25%
Conceptual	3	15%
Survey	1	5%
Descriptive	1	5%
Theoretical	1	5%

Table 4. Thematic Distribution of the Reviewed Studies

Theme	Frequency
Pedagogical Innovation	11
Technology Integration	8
Character Education	7
Curriculum Development	4
Teacher Professionalism	3

From the table above, the findings of this study can be explained as follows:

3.1.1 Major Patterns and Research Trends

The synthesis of the reviewed studies reveals three major patterns in the transformation of Islamic Religious Education (PAI). First, pedagogical innovation emerges as the dominant research theme, appearing in more than half of the reviewed studies (11 out of 20 articles). This finding indicates a growing emphasis on student-centered learning approaches that promote higher-order thinking skills, particularly critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication. Second, digital technology integration has become an increasingly important component of PAI transformation, with eight studies highlighting the role of Learning Management Systems (LMS), digital media, and interactive learning platforms in enhancing student engagement and learning flexibility. Third, character education remains the distinguishing characteristic of PAI, with seven studies emphasizing the integration of Islamic values into competency development. Collectively, these findings demonstrate a clear shift from traditional content-oriented instruction toward competency-based and holistic learning.

The reviewed literature also demonstrates a noticeable research trend. Studies published between 2022 and 2025 increasingly focus on educational innovation and digital transformation, reflecting the growing influence of post-pandemic educational reforms and the widespread adoption of digital learning technologies. Earlier studies primarily emphasized curriculum adaptation and character education, whereas more recent research increasingly investigates innovative pedagogical models and

technology-supported learning environments. This trend suggests that the transformation of PAI has gradually evolved from curriculum reform toward a more comprehensive educational transformation that integrates pedagogy, technology, and learner competencies.

3.1.2 Methodological Trends

The methodological distribution of the reviewed studies indicates that qualitative research remains the dominant approach, followed by literature reviews and conceptual studies. Experimental, survey, mixed-methods, and descriptive studies are comparatively limited. This distribution suggests that existing research on PAI transformation remains largely exploratory and theoretical, while empirical studies evaluating the effectiveness of innovative instructional interventions are still relatively scarce. Consequently, stronger empirical evidence is needed to validate the long-term effectiveness of integrated PAI transformation models.

3.1.3 Comparative Analysis and Research Contradictions

Although the reviewed studies consistently acknowledge the importance of transforming PAI to address contemporary educational challenges, they differ considerably in their analytical focus. Studies emphasizing pedagogical innovation generally report significant improvements in students' critical thinking, analytical ability, and classroom participation through approaches such as Problem-Based Learning, Case-Based Learning, and experiential learning. However, these studies rarely examine how technological innovation can further strengthen instructional effectiveness.

Conversely, technology-oriented studies demonstrate that the integration of Learning Management Systems (LMS), digital media, and online learning environments substantially enhances student engagement and instructional flexibility. Nevertheless, these studies often provide limited discussion regarding the integration of Islamic values and character formation, thereby treating technology primarily as an instructional tool rather than as part of a broader educational transformation. Similarly, studies focusing on character education consistently emphasize the importance of strengthening students' moral, spiritual, and religious values. However, most of these studies discuss character development independently from pedagogical innovation and digital technology, resulting in a limited explanation of how Islamic values can simultaneously support the development of 21st-century competencies.

These contrasting findings reveal a persistent fragmentation within the existing literature. Rather than examining pedagogical innovation, technology integration, and character education as interconnected dimensions, most studies investigate them separately. Consequently, the literature provides only a partial understanding of how these three dimensions collectively contribute to the transformation of PAI.

3.1.4 Research Gap and Integrative Synthesis

Beyond thematic differences, the review also identifies methodological and conceptual gaps. Most empirical studies focus on evaluating a single instructional strategy or technological application, whereas conceptual studies primarily discuss curriculum reform or educational philosophy without empirical validation. As a result, few studies offer a comprehensive explanation of how pedagogy, digital technology, and Islamic character education interact within a unified educational framework.

This fragmentation constitutes the principal research gap identified through the present Systematic Literature Review. While previous studies provide valuable insights into individual dimensions of PAI transformation, they rarely explain the dynamic relationships among these dimensions or their collective contribution to developing students' 21st-century competencies. Based on the synthesis of the reviewed literature, this study proposes an integrative conceptual framework in which pedagogical innovation, digital technology integration, and Islamic character education function as complementary and mutually reinforcing components. Rather than operating independently, these dimensions interact dynamically to create adaptive, student-centered, and contextually relevant

learning environments that support the development of critical thinking, creativity, communication, collaboration, and strong religious character. Accordingly, PAI transformation is conceptualized as a mediating process that connects instructional innovation with competency-based educational outcomes.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that effective transformation of Islamic Religious Education cannot be achieved through isolated improvements in pedagogy, technology, or character education. Instead, sustainable transformation requires an integrated educational approach that simultaneously combines these three dimensions within a coherent instructional framework. This integrative synthesis provides the empirical and conceptual foundation for the discussion presented in the following section.

3.2 Discussion

3.2.1 Interpreting the Integrative Transformation of Islamic Religious Education

The findings of this Systematic Literature Review (SLR) demonstrate that the transformation of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) should not be understood as the implementation of isolated instructional innovations but rather as an integrative educational process that simultaneously combines pedagogical innovation, digital technology integration, and Islamic character education. Unlike previous studies that predominantly examined these dimensions independently, the present review indicates that effective PAI transformation depends on the dynamic interaction among these three components. Within the proposed framework, pedagogical innovation functions as the instructional mechanism, digital technology serves as the enabling environment, and character education provides the normative foundation that ensures the preservation of Islamic values throughout the learning process. Consequently, PAI transformation acts as a mediating process linking instructional inputs with the development of students' 21st-century competencies while simultaneously strengthening their religious identity (Rahman, 2023; Dewi, 2024; Muhaimin, 2020).

This integrative interpretation extends previous research that primarily emphasized either pedagogical reform or digital innovation. The synthesis demonstrates that educational transformation in PAI cannot be reduced to technological adoption or curriculum revision alone. Rather, meaningful transformation requires coherent interaction among instructional strategies, technological resources, and value-based learning so that cognitive, affective, and spiritual dimensions develop simultaneously. Such an interpretation reflects the distinctive nature of PAI, whose educational objectives encompass not only academic achievement but also moral and spiritual formation (Azra, 2021; Rahim, 2022).

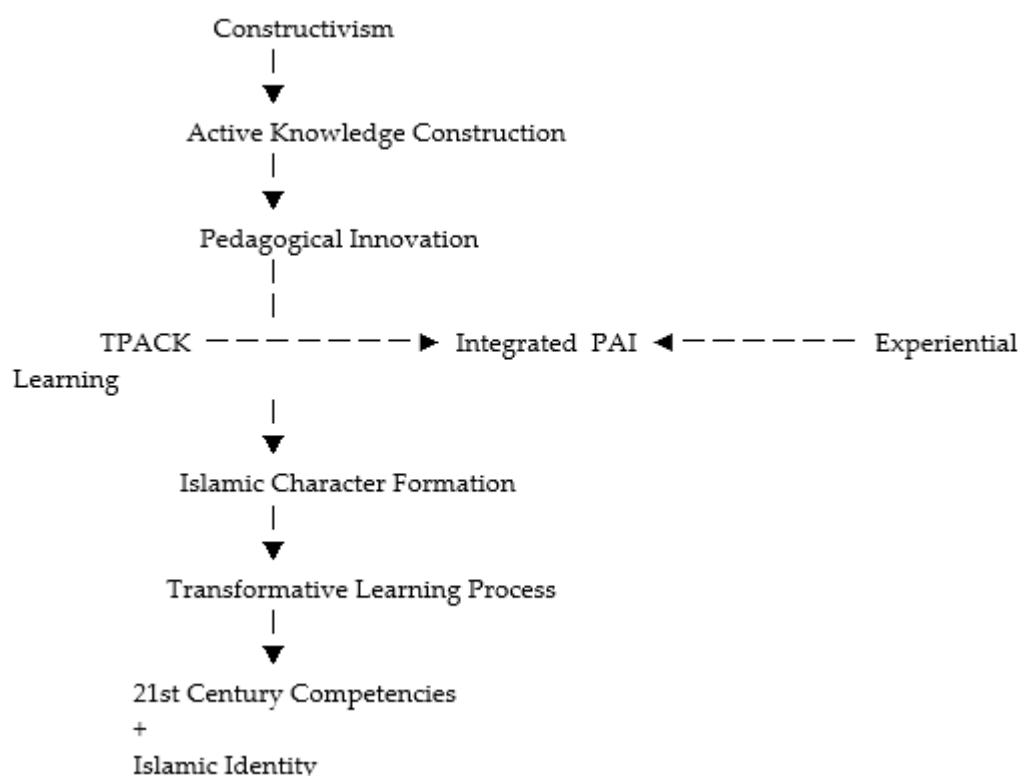


Figure 1. Theoretical Interpretation of the Integrative PAI Transformation Model

The transformation of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) represents a strategic response to the challenges of 21st-century education. Through a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach, this study demonstrates that PAI transformation is carried out through pedagogical innovation, the integration of digital technologies, and the strengthening of character education. Such transformation has been shown to foster students' competencies in a comprehensive manner, encompassing critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration skills. In addition, PAI continues to play a pivotal role in nurturing students' religious character. Moving forward, there is a need to develop more innovative and technology-enhanced PAI learning models to improve instructional effectiveness. Furthermore, future research is essential to empirically examine the implementation of PAI transformation across diverse educational contexts.

3.2.2 Balancing Educational Modernization and Islamic Tradition

One of the most significant findings emerging from this review is the continuing tension between educational modernization and the preservation of Islamic tradition. Contemporary educational reforms increasingly emphasize critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, communication, and digital literacy as essential competencies for the twenty-first century (OECD, 2021; World Economic Forum, 2020). Conversely, Islamic Religious Education has historically focused on cultivating faith (*iman*), moral character (*akhlaq*), and spiritual consciousness. These seemingly divergent objectives have often been treated as competing priorities within educational practice.

However, the present findings suggest that modernization and religious tradition should not be regarded as contradictory. Instead, pedagogical innovation and technological advancement become educationally meaningful when they are guided by Islamic ethical principles. Student-centered learning, collaborative inquiry, and digital learning environments can strengthen rather than diminish

students' religious identity when learning activities remain grounded in Islamic values. Therefore, the transformation of PAI should be viewed as a process of educational renewal (*tajdid*) that preserves essential religious principles while adapting instructional practices to contemporary educational challenges (Nasr, 2021; Hashim, 2020).

3.2.3 Technology Adoption and the Preservation of Islamic Values

The review further reveals that technology has become an indispensable component of contemporary Islamic education. Learning Management Systems (LMS), interactive digital media, and online learning platforms consistently enhance instructional flexibility, student engagement, and collaborative learning (Anwar & Hidayat, 2023; Yusuf et al., 2022). Nevertheless, technological innovation alone cannot ensure meaningful educational transformation.

Technology remains pedagogically neutral, meaning that its educational effectiveness depends largely on how teachers integrate digital resources within purposeful instructional strategies. In the context of PAI, digital technology should facilitate not only knowledge acquisition but also ethical reflection, spiritual development, and value internalization. Accordingly, the findings indicate that technology adoption must always be accompanied by pedagogical competence and moral guidance to prevent digital learning from becoming merely content delivery without meaningful character formation (Redecker, 2020; Holmes et al., 2022).

3.2.4 Explaining the Persistence of Fragmentation in PAI Research

A major contribution of this review lies in identifying why fragmentation continues to characterize research on PAI transformation. The synthesis demonstrates that existing studies predominantly investigate pedagogical innovation, technology integration, and character education as separate domains. Pedagogical studies primarily evaluate instructional effectiveness, technology-oriented studies emphasize digital engagement, whereas character education research focuses on moral and spiritual development. Consequently, relatively few studies explain how these dimensions interact within a single educational framework.

This fragmentation may be attributed to disciplinary specialization and differing research traditions. Educational technology research generally prioritizes instructional efficiency and technological acceptance, whereas Islamic education scholarship traditionally emphasizes value transmission and moral formation. As a result, the literature provides valuable insights into individual dimensions but offers limited explanation regarding their interconnectedness. The integrative framework proposed in this study addresses this conceptual gap by positioning pedagogy, technology, and Islamic values as mutually reinforcing rather than independent educational components.

3.2.5 Theoretical Implications

The proposed framework is strongly supported by several contemporary educational theories. First, it aligns with Constructivist Learning Theory, which views learners as active constructors of knowledge through authentic experiences and social interaction (Piaget, 1972; Vygotsky, 1978). Student-centered approaches such as Problem-Based Learning (PBL) and Case-Based Learning (CBL) encourage learners to construct understanding collaboratively while solving contextual problems.

Second, the findings reinforce Experiential Learning Theory (Kolb, 2022), which emphasizes that meaningful learning occurs through concrete experience, reflective observation, conceptualization, and active experimentation. Within Islamic education, experiential learning enables students not only to understand Islamic teachings conceptually but also to internalize them through authentic life experiences and reflective practice. Third, the integration of pedagogical innovation and digital technology reflects the principles of the Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) framework (Mishra & Koehler, 2006; Koehler et al., 2020). Effective digital transformation in PAI requires teachers to integrate technological knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and Islamic content

knowledge simultaneously. In this context, Islamic values constitute the distinctive content dimension that differentiates PAI from other educational disciplines.

Finally, the proposed model is consistent with Transformative Learning Theory, which conceptualizes learning as a process of perspective transformation rather than mere knowledge acquisition (Mezirow, 2000). The transformation of PAI therefore extends beyond improving students' academic competencies toward developing ethical awareness, critical reflection, religious identity, and lifelong learning dispositions. Consequently, this study contributes theoretically by demonstrating that competency development and Islamic character formation can be integrated within a single conceptual framework rather than treated as separate educational objectives.

3.2.6 Practical Implications

The findings provide several practical implications for educators, curriculum developers, and educational policymakers. For teachers, the proposed framework emphasizes the importance of implementing student-centered instructional approaches while integrating digital technologies and Islamic values into everyday classroom practice. Such integration enables students to develop critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication without compromising their moral and spiritual development (Hidayat, 2022; Rahman, 2023).

At the institutional level, successful implementation of PAI transformation requires continuous professional development, adequate technological infrastructure, and supportive educational policies. Curriculum developers should design competency-based curricula that integrate pedagogical innovation, digital literacy, and character education as complementary learning dimensions rather than independent curriculum components. Likewise, policymakers should facilitate sustainable digital transformation while ensuring that educational reforms remain aligned with the philosophical objectives of Islamic education (Azra, 2021; Sutrisno, 2023; UNESCO, 2021).

3.2.7 Limitations and Future Research

Despite providing a comprehensive synthesis of current research, this study has several limitations. First, the review includes only studies retrieved from selected academic databases published between 2020 and 2025, which may have excluded relevant publications from other databases or languages. Second, methodological heterogeneity among the reviewed studies limited direct comparison of findings. Third, the proposed integrative framework remains conceptual and has not yet been empirically validated through classroom-based intervention studies.

Future research should therefore examine the effectiveness of this framework using experimental, longitudinal, or mixed-method designs across diverse educational settings. Comparative studies involving different cultural contexts and educational systems would further strengthen understanding of how pedagogical innovation, digital technology, and Islamic character education interact in supporting sustainable transformation of Islamic Religious Education.

4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the transformation of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) represents a strategic and necessary response to the evolving demands of 21st-century education. Based on a PRISMA-guided Systematic Literature Review (SLR), the findings demonstrate that effective PAI transformation requires the integrated implementation of pedagogical innovation, digital technology, and Islamic character education, rather than isolated improvements in each dimension. The synthesis further reveals that existing research remains fragmented across these domains, highlighting the need for a more comprehensive and coherent approach to developing students' 21st-century competencies.

The principal theoretical contribution of this study lies in the development of an integrative conceptual framework that positions PAI transformation as a mediating process connecting pedagogical innovation, technology integration, and Islamic character education with the development of critical thinking, creativity, communication, collaboration, and religious identity. By integrating

insights from constructivism, experiential learning, TPACK, and transformative learning theory, this framework extends current scholarship on Islamic education beyond normative discussions toward a competency-oriented and contextually adaptive educational model.

From a practical perspective, the proposed framework provides guidance for PAI teachers, curriculum developers, and educational institutions in designing student-centered, technology-enhanced, and value-based learning environments. At the policy level, the findings suggest that educational authorities should strengthen teacher professional development, expand digital infrastructure, and formulate competency-based curricula that integrate technological innovation with Islamic values to support sustainable educational transformation.

Despite these contributions, this study has several limitations. The review was confined to selected databases and publications between 2020 and 2025, and the proposed framework remains conceptual without direct empirical validation. Therefore, the findings should be interpreted within the scope of the reviewed literature. Future studies should empirically validate the proposed integrative model across diverse Islamic educational settings, including primary schools, secondary schools, Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*), and higher education institutions. Comparative, longitudinal, and mixed-method studies are also recommended to evaluate the effectiveness, adaptability, and long-term impact of the model across different cultural and institutional contexts.

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