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An Integrative Framework for the Design and Development of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in the Digital Era

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the nature, scope, and development of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning design in the digital era. The study employs a qualitative library research method with a descriptive-analytical approach by examining relevant literature on instructional design, Islamic education, and digital learning. The findings reveal that PAI learning design is a systematic and integrative process that connects learning objectives, materials, strategies, media, and evaluation while emphasizing the integration of cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains. The study also finds that the development of PAI learning is a continuous process grounded in both technological advancement and Islamic principles, particularly the concept of self-evaluation (muhasabah) as reflected in Qur'anic teachings. In addition, the scope of PAI learning design includes student analysis, objective formulation, material selection, strategy and method determination, media utilization, and comprehensive evaluation. The study further clarifies the conceptual distinctions among instructional design, models, strategies, and methods, which are often used interchangeably in educational practice. The novelty of this study lies in its integrative conceptual framework that combines instructional design theory, digital transformation, and Islamic educational values. This study contributes to the development of more adaptive, value-oriented, and meaningful PAI learning in the digital era.

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Introduction

Education plays a fundamental role in improving human quality of life, as it transforms ignorance into knowledge and shapes individual and social development (Ferinda et al., 2024). As a dynamic and evolving manifestation of human culture, education must continuously adapt to societal changes, particularly in response to technological advancements and shifting lifestyles (Al-Tabany, 2014). In the contemporary digital era, marked by the rapid growth of artificial intelligence (AI), big data, and digital platforms, the need for adaptive and relevant educational design has become increasingly urgent.

Islamic Religious Education (Pendidikan Agama Islam/PAI) occupies a strategic position within the national education system, as it is responsible for nurturing students' spiritual, moral, and character development (Khotimah et al., 2025). Ideally, PAI learning is not limited to cognitive knowledge transfer but also encompasses the internalization of Islamic values, attitudes, and practices in students' daily lives (Nugraha et al., 2024; Zahran et al., 2025). However, in practice, PAI learning often remains dominated by conventional approaches, where teaching is largely teacher-centered and focused on theoretical content delivery, thereby limiting students' active engagement and holistic development (Hawi, 2014).

Recent studies have highlighted the importance of instructional design in improving learning quality. For instance, Wati (2023) emphasizes that learning planning is a strategic component in enhancing educational effectiveness, while Adiningrat and Albina (2024) demonstrate that well-structured instructional strategies contribute to a more conducive and competency-oriented learning environment. Furthermore, research on digital-era education underscores the necessity of integrating technology into learning processes to meet the needs of contemporary learners (Wulandari et al., 2022; Ningrum et al., 2025). These studies collectively suggest that effective learning design is crucial for achieving meaningful educational outcomes.

Despite these contributions, existing studies tend to focus either on general instructional design or on the implementation of technology in education, without specifically examining the conceptual integration between the nature, scope, and development of PAI learning design in the digital era. In addition, there remains limited discussion on the clear distinction between key instructional concepts—such as design, models, strategies, and methods—within the context of PAI learning. This gap indicates the need for a more comprehensive conceptual analysis that systematically explains how PAI learning design and development should be constructed in response to contemporary educational challenges.

Based on this gap, this study aims to analyze the nature, scope, and development of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning design in the digital era. Specifically, this research seeks to: (1) examine the conceptual foundations of PAI learning design and development, (2) identify the scope of PAI instructional design, and (3) clarify the distinctions among design, models, strategies, and methods in PAI learning. The novelty of this study lies in its integrative conceptual framework that connects Islamic educational values with modern instructional design principles and digital-era demands. This study is expected to contribute to the development of more adaptive, relevant, and meaningful PAI learning, capable of producing a generation that is spiritually grounded, morally upright, and responsive to global challenges.

Method

This study employed a qualitative library research design with a descriptive-analytical approach. This method was selected because the focus of the study is conceptual and theoretical, aiming to examine the nature, scope, and development of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning design in the digital era through a systematic analysis of relevant literature. The data used in this study consisted of both primary and secondary sources. Primary sources included academic books and scholarly works that specifically discuss instructional design, Islamic Religious Education curriculum development, and learning theories, while secondary sources consisted of peer-reviewed journal articles, national education policy documents such as Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System, and relevant Islamic texts that support the conceptual framework of the study.

To ensure the quality and relevance of the data, the literature selection was conducted based on several criteria, including relevance to instructional design, Islamic education, and digital learning; publication in peer-reviewed journals or academic books; publication within the last ten years, with limited inclusion of seminal works; and availability in credible academic sources. Data collection was carried out using the documentation method, which involves identifying, selecting, and systematically reviewing written materials such as books, journal articles, and policy documents. The literature search focused on key themes, namely the concept and nature of PAI learning design, the development of PAI learning, the scope of instructional design, distinctions among design, models, strategies, and methods, and the challenges of PAI learning in the digital era.

The data analysis employed qualitative content analysis combined with descriptive analysis. The analysis process was conducted through three stages: data reduction, which involved selecting and organizing relevant information while discarding irrelevant data; data display, which involved structuring the selected information into a systematic and coherent narrative; and conclusion drawing, which involved synthesizing findings from various sources to generate a comprehensive understanding of the research topic. In addition, a thematic analysis approach was applied to identify recurring patterns and categorize key concepts across the literature.

To ensure the validity of the findings, this study applied source triangulation by comparing information from multiple references to confirm consistency and accuracy. Furthermore, each argument presented in the discussion is supported by multiple scholarly sources to minimize bias and enhance the credibility of the analysis.

Results

This study identifies comprehensive findings regarding the nature, development, scope, conceptual distinctions, and urgency of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning design in the digital era based on a systematic analysis of relevant literature.

The Nature of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) Learning Design

The findings indicate that PAI learning design is fundamentally a systematic and structured planning process that integrates various instructional components, including learning objectives, materials, strategies, media, and evaluation. The analysis shows that learning design is not merely associated with technical preparation, but also involves the

organization of ideas and pedagogical strategies aimed at achieving effective and meaningful learning outcomes.

In the context of PAI, learning design plays a transformative role, as it not only facilitates knowledge transfer but also supports the development of students' character, attitudes, and skills. This reflects the integration of cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains as a core characteristic of PAI learning. Therefore, PAI learning design must be oriented toward holistic student development, ensuring that learning is not limited to theoretical understanding but also includes value internalization and behavioral transformation.

The Nature of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) Learning Development

The findings show that PAI learning development emphasizes a continuous and sustainable improvement process. Development is not limited to producing new approaches but also involves evaluating and refining existing practices to ensure their relevance and effectiveness.

From an Islamic perspective, this process is closely related to the principle of self-reflection and future orientation, as reflected in the Qur'anic teaching in Surah Al-Hasyr (59:18), which states:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَانظُرُوا نَفْسَ مَا قَدَّمْتُمْ لِغَدٍ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ

“O you who believe, fear Allah. And let every soul look to what it has put forth for tomorrow—and fear Allah. Indeed, Allah is Acquainted with what you do.” (QS. Al-Hasyr: 18)

This verse emphasizes the importance of continuous self-evaluation (*muhasabah*) and improvement. In the context of PAI learning, development can be understood as an ongoing effort to enhance instructional quality while maintaining alignment with Islamic values. In the digital era, this development is further influenced by technological advancements such as artificial intelligence (AI), digital media, and online learning platforms, which enable more flexible, interactive, and personalized learning.

Scope of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) Learning Design

The analysis identifies that the scope of PAI learning design consists of several interconnected components:

1. Analysis of student needs, including background, development level, motivation, and social context.
2. Formulation of learning objectives, covering cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains.
3. Selection of learning materials, aligned with Islamic teachings and students' needs.
4. Determination of strategies and methods, emphasizing active and participatory learning.
5. Utilization of media and learning resources, including both classical Islamic sources and digital technology.

6. Implementation of evaluation, assessing knowledge, attitudes, and skills through comprehensive and authentic assessment.

These components must be systematically integrated to ensure effective and meaningful learning outcomes.

Conceptual Distinctions: Design, Models, Strategies, and Methods

The findings reveal clear conceptual distinctions among instructional design, models, strategies, and methods in PAI learning. Instructional design functions as a macro-level framework that integrates all components of learning. Learning models represent structured conceptual frameworks that guide the learning process. Learning strategies refer to organized plans of action, while learning methods are practical techniques used in delivering instruction.

To clarify these distinctions, the findings are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Differences among Instructional Design, Models, Strategies, and Methods in PAI Learning

Aspect	Learning Design	Learning Model	Learning Strategy	Learning Method
Definition	Systematic process for planning components	Conceptual framework describing learning procedures	Plan of actions to achieve objectives	Techniques used to deliver instruction
Function	Integrates components learning	all Guides of learning processes	Directs learning activities	Facilitates material delivery
Components	Objectives, strategies, evaluation	materials, media, Steps, procedures	roles, Introduction, delivery, participation, assessment	Lecture, discussion, demonstration, inquiry
Examples	ADDIE, Dick & Carey	Problem-Based Learning, Inquiry	Expository, active learning	Lecture, discussion, blended learning

The Urgency of PAI Learning Design in the Digital Era

The findings indicate that the urgency of PAI learning design is closely related to the characteristics of digital-native learners, such as Generation Z and Generation Alpha. These learners prefer interactive, visual, flexible, and technology-based learning environments. They are accustomed to using digital platforms, social media, and multimedia resources.

Therefore, PAI learning design must adapt by integrating digital technologies, promoting active participation, and fostering critical thinking and collaboration. However, the findings emphasize that such adaptation must remain grounded in Islamic values to ensure that technological advancements support the formation of faith, morality, and social responsibility.

Overall, these findings demonstrate that PAI learning design in the digital era requires a holistic, adaptive, and value-oriented approach that integrates instructional design principles, technological advancements, and Islamic educational values.

Discussion

The findings of this study provide a comprehensive understanding of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning design in the digital era as an integrative, adaptive, and value-oriented process. The identification of learning design as a systematic framework that integrates objectives, materials, strategies, media, and evaluation reinforces previous studies that emphasize the strategic role of instructional planning in achieving effective learning outcomes (Wati, 2023; Adiningrat & Albina, 2024). However, this study extends these perspectives by highlighting that, within the context of PAI, learning design must explicitly integrate cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains. This integrative orientation reflects the distinctive nature of PAI learning, which is not limited to knowledge transmission but also emphasizes character formation and value internalization.

Furthermore, the finding that PAI learning development is characterized by continuous improvement aligns with broader educational theories that view education as a dynamic process that must respond to societal and technological changes (Al-Tabany, 2014). The integration of digital technologies, particularly artificial intelligence (AI), into learning processes supports previous research indicating that technology enhances flexibility, interactivity, and personalization in education (Ningrum et al., 2025; Ramadhani & Aripin, 2025). However, this study contributes a critical perspective by emphasizing that technological integration in PAI learning must remain grounded in Islamic ethical values. Without such grounding, there is a risk that technological innovation may shift the focus of education away from its moral and spiritual objectives.

The incorporation of Qur'anic principles, particularly Surah Al-Hasyr (59:18), further strengthens the conceptual foundation of PAI learning development. The verse emphasizes the importance of *muhasabah* (self-evaluation) and future-oriented thinking, which aligns with the concept of continuous improvement identified in this study. This finding extends conventional instructional development theories, which often prioritize efficiency and effectiveness, by introducing a spiritual dimension that emphasizes accountability before God. In this sense, development in PAI learning is not merely a technical process but also a moral and spiritual responsibility, making it fundamentally different from general educational development models.

In addition, the identification of the scope of PAI learning design as an interconnected system contributes to a more holistic understanding of instructional planning. While previous studies often discuss instructional components such as objectives, materials, and evaluation separately, this study demonstrates that these elements must function cohesively to produce meaningful learning outcomes. This systemic perspective is particularly relevant in PAI learning, where the integration of knowledge, attitudes, and practices is essential for achieving comprehensive educational goals.

The clarification of conceptual distinctions among instructional design, models, strategies, and methods also represents an important contribution. In many educational contexts, these terms are often used interchangeably, leading to conceptual ambiguity and inconsistencies in instructional practice. By clearly differentiating these concepts, this study provides a more precise framework that can guide educators in designing and implementing effective learning. This finding supports existing instructional design theories while offering a contextualized application within Islamic education, as summarized in Table 1.

Moreover, the findings regarding the urgency of adapting PAI learning design to the characteristics of digital-native learners highlight the need for transforming traditional instructional approaches. The preference of Generation Z and Generation Alpha for interactive, visual, and flexible learning environments reflects broader trends in contemporary education (Wahid & Hamami, 2021). This study confirms that integrating digital tools, collaborative learning, and student-centered approaches is essential to engage these learners effectively. However, it also emphasizes that such adaptation should not be driven solely by technological trends but must be guided by pedagogical and ethical considerations rooted in Islamic values.

Overall, this study demonstrates that effective PAI learning design in the digital era requires a careful balance between technological innovation and value preservation. The findings contribute to the existing body of knowledge by offering a holistic conceptual framework that integrates instructional design principles, digital transformation, and Islamic educational values. This integrative approach is essential for developing PAI learning that is not only relevant and adaptive to contemporary challenges but also capable of fostering students' spiritual awareness, moral integrity, and social responsibility.

Conclusion

This study concludes that Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning design in the digital era should be understood as a holistic, integrative, and value-oriented process that goes beyond technical instructional planning. It integrates objectives, materials, strategies, media, and evaluation while emphasizing the development of cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains to support meaningful learning and character formation.

The findings also indicate that PAI learning development is a continuous and adaptive process grounded not only in technological advancement but also in Islamic principles, particularly muhasabah (self-evaluation) and future orientation. In this context, the integration of digital technologies must remain aligned with Islamic ethical values to ensure that innovation supports the moral and spiritual objectives of education.

The novelty of this study lies in its integrative conceptual framework that combines instructional design, digital transformation, and Islamic educational values. However, as a library-based study, its findings are limited to conceptual analysis without empirical validation. Therefore, future research is recommended to test this framework in real educational settings and explore the effectiveness of digital integration in PAI learning.

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