POSITIONING DIGITAL LITERACY IN MODERN PESANTREN: TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS AND EDUCATIONAL IMPLEMENTATION

MEMPOSISIKAN LITERASI DIGITAL DI PESANTREN MODERN: PERSEPSI GURU DAN IMPLEMENTASI PENDIDIKAN

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Abstract

Digital literacy has become an essential competence in modern education; however, its implementation in pesantren presents distinctive dynamics, particularly when institutions restrict students' access to digital devices while simultaneously encouraging teachers to master digital literacy. This study aims to examine how digital literacy is positioned, perceived, and implemented in the learning process at Pesantren Ar-Raudlatul Hasanah as one of Indonesia's modern pesantren. Employing a qualitative approach with a case study design, data were collected through semi-structured interviews, non-participant observation of classroom practices and pesantren activities, and analysis of institutional documents. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify relevant patterns and key themes. The findings reveal that digital literacy in the pesantren is positioned primarily as a learning resource mediated by teachers rather than as an individual competence freely accessible to students. Teachers' perceptions of digital literacy are reflective and selective, shaped by moral and scholarly responsibility, concern for students' ethical conduct (adab), and apprehension regarding the negative impacts of the digital environment. In terms of implementation, digital literacy is applied in a limited and functional manner through teachers' use of digital learning media, basic computer courses for students, cultural and extracurricular pesantren activities, and the digitalization of institutional administrative systems. This study concludes that the pesantren has developed a contextual and ethically grounded model of digital literacy, in which technology functions as a supportive educational tool without displacing core values, scholarly authority, or the primary goal of students' character formation. These findings contribute empirical insights to the growing body of research on digital literacy within the context of Islamic education, particularly in modern pesantren.

Keywords : digital literacy, modern pesantren, teachers' perceptions, learning, Islamic education.

Abstrak

Literasi digital telah menjadi kompetensi penting dalam pendidikan modern, namun implementasinya di pesantren menghadirkan dinamika yang khas, terutama ketika lembaga membatasi akses santri terhadap perangkat digital, sementara pada saat yang sama mendorong guru untuk menguasai literasi digital. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis bagaimana literasi digital diposisikan, dipersepsikan, dan diimplementasikan dalam pembelajaran di Pesantren Ar-Raudlatul Hasanah sebagai salah satu pesantren modern di Indonesia. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain studi kasus. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara semi-terstruktur, observasi non-partisipan terhadap praktik pembelajaran dan kegiatan pesantren, serta analisis dokumen kelembagaan. Data dianalisis menggunakan analisis tematik untuk mengidentifikasi pola dan tema utama yang relevan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa literasi digital di pesantren diposisikan sebagai sumber pembelajaran yang dimediasi oleh guru, bukan sebagai kompetensi individual santri yang dapat diakses secara bebas. Persepsi guru terhadap literasi digital bersifat reflektif dan selektif, dipengaruhi oleh tanggung jawab moral-keilmuan, perhatian terhadap adab santri, serta kekhawatiran terhadap dampak negatif dunia digital. Dalam implementasinya, literasi digital diterapkan secara terbatas dan fungsional melalui penggunaan media pembelajaran oleh guru, kursus komputer dasar bagi santri, kegiatan kultural pesantren, serta digitalisasi sistem administrasi kelembagaan. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa pesantren mengembangkan model literasi digital yang kontekstual dan bernuansa etis, yang menempatkan teknologi sebagai sarana pendukung pendidikan tanpa menggeser nilai, otoritas keilmuan, dan tujuan pembentukan karakter santri. Temuan ini memberikan kontribusi empiris bagi pengembangan kajian literasi digital dalam konteks pendidikan Islam, khususnya pesantren modern.

Kata Kunci : literasi digital, pesantren modern, persepsi guru, pembelajaran, pendidikan Islam.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the context of globalization and the ongoing industrial revolution, digital literacy has emerged as a critical competency shaping the effectiveness of learning processes and individuals' participation in the contemporary information society (Farid, 2023). Digital literacy is commonly understood as the ability to access, evaluate, utilize, and produce information through digital technologies in an effective, critical, and responsible manner (Pratiwi, Ariyani, Elisa, & Harahap, 2024). Within modern educational systems, this competency is no longer regarded as supplementary but as an essential foundation for meaningful learning across disciplines, including within Islamic educational institutions such as madrasahs, pesantren, and Islamic higher education.

Pesantren occupy a distinctive position within Indonesia's educational landscape, standing at the intersection of global educational demands and the preservation of deeply rooted religious traditions (Alfauzi & Faslah, 2025; Kholifah, 2022; Muzakky, Mahmuudy, & Faristiana, 2023). A growing body of literature suggests that pesantren possess a remarkable adaptive capacity, enabling them to respond to social and technological change while maintaining their institutional identity and educational ethos (Abidin, 2020; Lathifah et al., 2025; Muiz, 2023). In recent decades, many modern pesantren have begun to integrate digital technologies into learning strategies and institutional management as part of broader efforts to prepare students for an increasingly digitalized society (Rasyidin & Harahap, 2024).

However, this process of adaptation is neither linear nor uniform. A significant number of pesantren continue to enforce strict regulations prohibiting students from using electronic devices and accessing the Internet directly. Such policies are commonly justified on the grounds of maintaining discipline, safeguarding moral values, and ensuring students' concentration on religious learning (Siregar, 2024; Ulum & Munim, 2019). Consequently, pesantren operate within a paradoxical educational environment: while digital competence is institutionally acknowledged as important, students' engagement with the digital world remains indirect and mediated. In this context, teachers assume a central role as intermediaries who access, filter, and transmit digital information to students (Dinihari, Solihatun, Wiyanti, & Nazelliana, 2025; Dinihari et al., 2025).

Extant research on digital literacy in formal education consistently highlights its positive impact on learning quality and students' preparedness for twenty-first-century challenges. Digital literacy is associated not only with technical proficiency but also with the development of critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication skills. Within this framework, teachers are widely recognized as pivotal agents in cultivating students' digital literacy by guiding them to engage with digital content critically, ethically, and purposefully (Nst, Saifullah, & Arsyad, 2025).

In the field of Islamic education, digital literacy has increasingly been conceptualized as more than a pedagogical tool; it is viewed as an epistemic and ethical foundation for navigating religious knowledge in digital spaces (Oktaviani & Setiawati, n.d.; Zaimina & Zahrah, 2024). Scholars argue that digital literacy within Islamic education must integrate technical, cognitive, ethical, and spiritual dimensions in order to remain consistent with Islamic values. For example, Zaimina and Zahrah (2024) demonstrate that the integration of digital literacy in Aqidah Akhlak instruction requires a holistic approach that balances technological competence with moral and spiritual considerations.

Despite the growing volume of scholarship on digital literacy and pesantren education, much of the existing literature remains oriented toward idealized or generalized models of technological integration. Studies frequently emphasize digitalization in terms of e-learning platforms, social media use for da'wah, or institutional modernization, without sufficiently addressing the lived realities of pesantren that deliberately limit students' access to digital technology (Abidin, 2020; Farid, 2023; Muiz, 2023; Pratiwi et al., 2024). As a result, the specific mechanisms through which digital literacy is positioned, perceived, and implemented in such contexts remain underexplored.

Recent studies indicate that the development of digital literacy in pesantren faces multiple challenges, including infrastructural constraints, limited access to technology, cultural resistance, and uneven levels of digital competence among teachers and students (Muzakky et al., 2023; Zainuddin, 2025). At the same time, research on implementation strategies suggests that successful integration of digital literacy in pesantren is highly dependent on internal institutional policies, teacher capacity-building initiatives, and external collaborations with educational stakeholders (Amin, 2024; Aprilianto & Rahmawati, 2025). Nevertheless, these

studies rarely foreground the implications of restricting students' direct digital access as a defining structural condition of pesantren education.

This gap in the literature constitutes the central problem addressed by the present study. There is a clear discrepancy between global imperatives advocating universal digital literacy and pesantren policies that limit students' interaction with digital technologies for pedagogical and moral reasons. This discrepancy produces a distinctive educational configuration in which digital literacy is concentrated primarily at the level of teachers, shaped by perceptions that digital information must be selectively filtered, and implemented in constrained yet adaptive forms.

Accordingly, this study aims to examine digital literacy in modern pesantren through three interconnected analytical lenses. First, it investigates the position of digital literacy within the institutional and pedagogical structure of pesantren learning. Second, it explores teachers' perceptions of digital literacy, particularly their understanding of digital information as content that requires careful selection and moral filtering before being conveyed to students. Third, it analyzes the forms of digital literacy implementation that emerge within pesantren contexts, including the use of basic digital media such as presentation tools, computer courses, and the digitalization of administrative systems.

By examining the position of digital literacy in this manner, the study seeks to clarify how digital knowledge and technology are negotiated within an educational system deeply grounded in religious values. Analyzing teachers' perceptions provides insight into how they reconcile professional demands for digital competence with ethical and religious responsibilities. Furthermore, investigating implementation practices offers a realistic depiction of how digital literacy is operationalized in pesantren settings without compromising institutional norms.

In conclusion, this study contributes empirically and conceptually to the growing body of scholarship on digital literacy in Islamic education, particularly within the context of modern pesantren in Indonesia. It offers a contextualized understanding of digital literacy that moves beyond binary notions of technological acceptance or rejection, instead highlighting mediation, adaptation, and selective integration. The findings are expected to inform educators, pesantren leaders, and policymakers in developing digital literacy models that remain faithful to religious values while responding pragmatically to the demands of the twenty-first century.
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2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach with a case study design to gain an in-depth understanding of how digital literacy is positioned, perceived, and implemented within the context of a modern Islamic boarding school. A qualitative case study was selected because it allows for comprehensive exploration of meanings, educational practices, and institutional policies shaped by pesantren values, especially within a setting where students' direct access to digital devices is restricted, while teachers are encouraged to develop digital competencies.

The research was conducted at Pesantren Ar-Raudlatul Hasanah, a Pesantren modern in Indonesia that integrates a formal education system with pesantren traditions. This pesantren enforces strict regulations regarding students' use of electronic devices, yet at the same time supports the use of digital technology for teacher instruction, computer literacy courses, and administrative digital systems. Its distinctive characteristics make this pesantren an appropriate site for examining controlled and mediated digital literacy practices in an Islamic educational environment.

Participants were selected using purposive sampling based on their roles and direct involvement in managing and utilizing digital technology within the pesantren. Participants included teachers who use digital media in instructional contexts, pesantren leaders or administrators involved in policy formulation, and administrative staff responsible for managing the institution's digital systems. This sampling strategy ensured that data were collected from individuals with pertinent insights into both pedagogical and institutional aspects of digital literacy as (Isnaini et al., 2024) work.

Data collection involved semi-structured interviews, non-participant observation, and document analysis. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore participants' perspectives on the position of digital literacy within pesantren education, their perceptions of digital information that needs to be filtered before being conveyed to students, and how digital literacy is implemented in both instruction and administrative practices. Observations were conducted to directly examine practical uses of digital media in teaching activities, the utilization of presentation tools and computer labs, and the operation of digital systems in pesantren administration. Document analysis included review of teaching materials, digital instructional resources, pesantren policies regarding technology use, and internal documents related to digital system management.

Collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis, which involved identifying, coding, and grouping key themes emerging from interviews, observations, and document review. The analysis focused on three core themes: (1) digital literacy as a learning resource for teachers, (2) perceptions of digital literacy as knowledge requiring value-based filtering within the pesantren context, and (3) the implementation of digital literacy limited to instructional media and institutional support systems. Thematic analysis is consistent with methods used in other qualitative studies on digital literacy implementation in pesantren settings.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, data were triangulated across sources and methods. Member checking was conducted by sharing preliminary interpretations with participants to confirm the accuracy of the researcher's interpretations and to guard against misrepresentation. Ethical considerations were observed throughout the research process, including obtaining informed consent from participants, maintaining confidentiality, and using pseudonyms to protect their anonymity.

3. RESULT AND DISCCUSSION

a. The Position of Digital Literacy in Learning Process

The research findings indicate that digital literacy at Pesantren Ar-Raudlatul Hasanah is positioned in a distinctive manner and differs from digital literacy practices commonly found in formal educational institutions. Digital literacy is not understood as a competence that students must directly acquire through unrestricted access to digital devices and the internet. Instead, it is positioned as a learning resource that is controlled and mediated by teachers. Within the pesantren learning structure, teachers are formally established as role models (Harahap, 2023). Practically, they function as the main actors who access, process, and transform digital information before conveying it to students.

Most informants emphasized that the policy restricting students' use of electronic devices is not interpreted as a rejection of the digital world, but rather as a form of pedagogical regulation aligned with the pesantren's vision and values. This finding reinforces the role of teachers as learning facilitators, as analyzed by Nst et al., (2025). In digital literacy, the primary concern is not merely ownership or access to digital devices, but how knowledge from digital sources can reach users in a correct and safe manner. In this context, the pesantren positions digital literacy within epistemic and pedagogical domains, rather than purely technological-practical ones that often appear symbolic of progress yet are prone to misuse.

In practice, teachers utilize digital literacy mainly during the planning and enrichment stages of instruction. Teachers actively seek digital references, access academic journals, learning videos, and other online resources to enrich teaching materials. These materials are then processed, adapted, and further developed so that they are not delivered to students in a raw form. One teacher of Islamic studies explained that he *"searches for materials on the internet, but what is delivered to students is still adjusted to the classical texts and the pesantren curriculum."* This indicates that digital literacy functions as a secondary resource that complements, rather than replaces, the primary learning sources of the pesantren.

The findings also show that digital literacy holds an important position in teachers' professional development. Several informants viewed digital literacy skills as part of the professional demands of teachers in modern pesantren. One ustadz stated that *"teachers today must be digitally literate so as not to be left behind, even though students do not directly use technology."* This perspective reflects an institutional awareness that teachers' mastery of digital literacy is a prerequisite for maintaining learning quality amid rapid changes.

Beyond instructional activities, digital literacy is also positioned as a supporting element in pesantren management and administration. The digitalization of administrative systems, such as student data management, academic reports, and internal communication, demonstrates that the pesantren strategically utilizes digital technology at the institutional level. However, this utilization remains under the control of pesantren administrators and does not directly involve students as the primary users of digital systems. Parents, instead, occupy a position similar to teachers by filtering and managing information related to students' needs.

Interestingly, the teacher-mediated position of digital literacy is closely related to the structure of scholarly authority within the pesantren. Teachers function not only as transmitters of knowledge but also as guardians of epistemic legitimacy. One informant stated that *"not everything on the internet is appropriate as learning material for students."* This statement reflects an understanding that digital literacy represents a knowledge space that must be selectively managed by those who possess scholarly and moral authority.

From the students' perspective, although they do not have direct access to digital devices, observations indicate that they still receive learning materials enriched with digital sources. These materials are presented in the form of presentations, written summaries, or teachers' explanations that have been adjusted to the pesantren context. Thus, digital literacy continues to contribute to students' learning processes, even without direct interaction with technology.

In terms of creativity, students have also been able to utilize and develop digital-based technological devices to support various performances. Teacher-mediated digital learning is evident during the preparation stages of activities such as Drama Arena, Panggung Gembira, and arts and da'wah performances at the consulate level. During the implementation stage, students are personally supervised while operating digital equipment, including display screens, lighting systems, sound systems, and other technical devices.

Overall, the findings indicate that the position of digital literacy at Pesantren Ar-Raudlatul Hasanah is structured, hierarchical, and mediated. Digital literacy is not positioned as an individual competence that students may freely explore, but as a learning resource managed by teachers within the framework of pesantren values, goals, and policies. This position illustrates how modern pesantren selectively adopt digital literacy to respond to global demands without compromising their foundational educational principles.

b. Teachers' Perceptions of Digital Literacy in Learning

The findings indicate that teachers' perceptions of digital literacy at Pesantren Ar-Raudlatul Hasanah are shaped by a reflective tension between the demands of contemporary developments and the moral–scholarly responsibilities inherent in the pesantren tradition. Digital literacy is not perceived in binary terms as either a threat or a definitive solution; rather, it is understood as a reality that must be approached with caution, wisdom, and pedagogical control. This perception is grounded in teachers' long-standing experience in educating students within an environment that emphasizes discipline, proper conduct (adab), and scholarly authority, as reflected in the educational functions of tarbiyah, ta'lim, and ta'dib in Islamic education (Rasyidin, Suwanta, & Harahap, 2025).

Most teachers regard digital literacy as an unavoidable necessity for educators, yet not necessarily as a competence that should be directly transmitted to students. One teacher remarked that *"if teachers do not keep up with digital developments, our way of thinking will lag behind, but students may not be ready to receive everything."* This statement reflects an awareness of the differential needs between teachers as professional educators and students as learners within the pesantren system. In this view, digital literacy is first and foremost

perceived as a pedagogical competence for teachers before being considered a learning competence for students.

Teachers also demonstrate a reflective stance toward the potential negative impacts of the digital world. Many informants expressed concerns about distraction, the erosion of proper conduct, and the blurring of scholarly authority should students be granted unrestricted access to digital technologies. As one ustadz stated, *"the problem lies not in the technology itself, but in the students' mental readiness and adab in filtering information."* This perspective suggests that teachers do not reject digital literacy in principle; rather, they question the readiness of the value ecosystem that accompanies it. For pesantren teachers, digital literacy without a moral framework of adab is perceived as fragile and potentially risky knowledge.

At the same time, teachers acknowledge that completely isolating students from the digital world is not a realistic option. Several informants noted that students will inevitably engage with digital technologies after completing their education at the pesantren. Consequently, the pesantren is perceived as a pedagogical space that prepares students morally, intellectually, and spiritually before they encounter the digital world more openly. Within this framework, access restrictions are not understood as permanent prohibitions, but as a long-term educational strategy.

Teachers' perceptions of digital literacy are also influenced by their personal experiences in utilizing technology for instructional purposes. Teachers who actively participate in training programs, online seminars, or digital academic discussions tend to exhibit more open and adaptive perspectives, as reflected in their teaching practices (Harahap, Rasyidin, Br. Solin, & Samsuri, 2025). Nevertheless, such openness remains framed by the principle of selectivity. As one teacher noted, *"not all external methods are suitable for pesantren; we adopt what fits, not everything."* This attitude indicates that digital literacy is perceived as a pedagogical choice rather than a universal standard that must be adopted in its entirety.

Notably, teachers' perceptions also position digital literacy as a test of professional responsibility and scholarly integrity. Several informants emphasized that pesantren teachers are expected to act as filters of digital knowledge rather than mere transmitters of information. In this context, digital literacy is associated not only with technical skills but also with epistemic responsibility. Teachers bear a moral obligation to ensure that the information conveyed to students has undergone verification, value alignment, and consideration of its educational benefit.

At a deeper reflective level, some teachers associate digital literacy with shifts in knowledge authority in the digital era. The internet is perceived as a space of information overload that may obscure the distinction between verified and unverified knowledge, echoing (Nichols, 2017) notion of the *"death of expertise."* This condition is viewed as potentially undermining the teacher's role as the primary scholarly reference. Accordingly, pesantren teachers perceive their role not merely as mediators of technology, but as guardians of scholarly transmission (*sanad keilmuan*) amid the massive flow of digital information.

Despite these concerns, teachers' perceptions are not entirely defensive. Several informants view digital literacy as an opportunity to enrich methods of instruction and religious outreach, provided that it remains under the control of pesantren values and policies. Technology is perceived as a tool that can broaden perspectives, deepen understanding, and enhance the quality of content delivery without displacing the pesantren's foundational values. In this sense, digital literacy is understood as a pedagogical aid rather than the central axis of learning.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that teachers' perceptions of digital literacy at Pesantren Ar-Raudlatul Hasanah are reflective, selective, and ethically nuanced. Teachers do not position digital literacy as the ultimate goal of education, but rather as a means that must be subordinated to the formation of students' character, conduct, and scholarly integrity. These perceptions highlight the strategic role of pesantren teachers as interpreters of their time, striving to bridge the demands of modernity with deeply rooted traditions of Islamic education.

c. Implementation of Digital Literacy in Learning Programs

The findings indicate that the implementation of digital literacy at Pesantren Ar-Raudlatul Hasanah is carried out in a limited, controlled, and contextual manner. Digital literacy is not implemented as a technology-based learning model that allows students broad and direct opportunities for exploration. Instead, it functions as a supportive instrument selectively utilized by teachers and the pesantren institution. This pattern reflects the adaptive stance of modern pesantren in responding to digital technological developments without altering the foundational structure of education, pedagogical relationships, and deeply rooted pesantren values.

In classroom learning practices, the most visible form of digital literacy implementation is reflected in teachers' use of technology-based instructional media. Classroom observations show that teachers employ presentation tools such as computers and projectors to display learning materials in the form of slides, visual illustrations, and short instructional videos relevant to the topic being discussed. These digital media are used to clarify concepts, provide contextual examples, and enhance the attractiveness of content delivery. However, such use remains instrumental and does not replace the teacher's central role in the learning process. Teachers continue to control the learning flow, determine instructional emphasis, and connect digital content with classical reference texts and the pesantren curriculum. As one teacher noted, *"Digital media are only teaching aids. The core of learning remains the teacher's explanation and the kitab. Slides or videos help students understand, but they do not replace the existing learning process."*

In several subjects, particularly Islamic studies and Arabic language courses, digital literacy is also utilized as a means of enriching instructional materials. Teachers actively access digital resources such as scholarly articles, recorded sermons, and online learning materials to broaden perspectives and deepen their understanding of specific topics. These resources are not directly distributed to students; rather, they are carefully selected, summarized, and adjusted to students' comprehension levels and pesantren values. This practice indicates that

digital literacy implementation occurs primarily at the pre-instructional stage, namely in teachers' lesson planning and material development processes, rather than through direct student engagement with digital technology.

Beyond formal classroom instruction, digital literacy is also implemented through computer courses organized by the pesantren. These courses constitute the only formal space in which students directly interact with digital devices. The instructional content is basic and functional, covering computer fundamentals, word processing, simple presentation design, and introductory applications considered relevant. The courses are conducted under strict supervision, with predetermined duration and scope. Their primary objective is not to provide broad access to the digital world, but to equip students with minimal technical skills deemed necessary and safe. As one informant explained, *"We teach students only essential computer skills. They need to understand the basics, but access remains limited. Internet use is restricted because not all students are mentally and disciplinarily prepared."*

Digital literacy implementation is also evident in extracurricular and cultural activities, particularly during major pesantren events. Activities such as Drama Arena, Panggung Gembira, artistic performances, and student da'wah programs at the consulate level serve as practical spaces for applied digital literacy. In these contexts, digital technology supports technical aspects of performances, including multimedia management, lighting systems, sound systems, and visual displays. Teachers and activity supervisors act as designers and directors, while students are involved as technical operators under direct supervision.

During the preparation stage, teachers utilize digital tools to design performance concepts, develop scripts, and arrange visual and audio sequences. Students are then assigned specific technical roles, such as operating projection screens, managing lighting, or handling sound systems. Digital literacy implementation in this context is limited to clearly defined tasks, guided objectives, and strict supervision. As one activity supervisor stated, *"Students are involved in technical roles like operating screens or sound systems, but always with guidance. They learn technology within the framework of responsibility, not free experimentation."* This pattern demonstrates that digital literacy is practiced as an applied skill embedded in collective responsibility rather than individual exploration.

At the institutional level, digital literacy implementation is more intensively reflected in the digitalization of administrative and management systems. Student data management, attendance records, academic reports, and internal communication are handled through digital systems operated by administrative staff. In this practice, teachers and staff serve as the primary digital system operators, while students are not directly involved as users. Parents, instead, are external stakeholders who experience the impact of digitalization through access to academic and administrative information. This digitalization is viewed as an effort to improve efficiency, data accuracy, and institutional transparency, while remaining fully under pesantren control.

Notably, digital literacy implementation at Pesantren Ar-Raudlatul Hasanah is not uniform across teachers and activity units. The level of technology utilization largely depends on individual teachers' digital competence and the instructional needs of specific subjects.

Teachers with greater digital training and experience tend to employ instructional media more creatively, whereas others use technology in a more basic and functional manner. Nevertheless, the pesantren does not promote mass standardization of technology use, instead allowing limited adaptation as long as it aligns with institutional values and policies.

Overall, digital literacy implementation at Pesantren Ar-Raudlatul Hasanah can be understood as a selective, gradual, and function-oriented educational practice. Digital literacy is not positioned as an open learning ecosystem that encourages individual student exploration, but rather as a supportive tool serving instructional needs, limited technical skill development, and institutional management efficiency. This implementation model illustrates how modern pesantren pragmatically operationalize digital literacy while maintaining a balance between technological innovation and the continuity of Islamic educational traditions.

d. Discussion

This study reveals that digital literacy in Pesantren Ar-Raudlatul Hasanah is not merely a technical or pedagogical issue, but a deeply normative and epistemological matter. The findings demonstrate that digital literacy is positioned, perceived, and implemented through a framework of moral authority, pedagogical control, and institutional responsibility. Rather than adopting digital literacy as an open-ended competence oriented toward access, connectivity, and autonomy, as commonly emphasized in global digital education discourses, in this pesantren, articulates a distinctive model in which digital literacy is subordinated to the broader objectives of character formation (*tarbiyah*), knowledge transmission (*ta'lim*), and ethical cultivation (*ta'dib*).

First, regarding the position of digital literacy, the findings indicate that digital literacy is institutionally located as a secondary and mediated resource. It is primarily embedded in teachers' professional competencies rather than framed as a direct learning right for students. This position challenges dominant assumptions in digital literacy literature that equate literacy with access and participation. In the pesantren context, access is not considered a neutral educational good; instead, it is viewed as a pedagogical risk that must be managed through authority and filtering. This reinforces the argument that digital literacy is culturally situated and cannot be universally standardized without considering local educational philosophies and moral frameworks.

Second, the teachers' perceptions toward digital literacy reveal a reflective tension between modern educational demands and pesantren epistemology. Teachers do not reject digital literacy outright; rather, they reinterpret it through ethical and pedagogical lenses. Digital literacy is perceived as necessary for teachers to remain intellectually relevant and pedagogically effective, yet potentially harmful if transferred uncritically to students. This perception aligns with concerns raised in critical digital education studies regarding information overload, erosion of epistemic authority, and the weakening of teacher legitimacy in the digital age. However, unlike secular critiques that often focus on cognitive or institutional consequences, pesantren teachers ground their concerns primarily in adab, moral readiness, and the preservation of knowledge transmission traditions (*sanad keilmuan*).

The teachers' emphasis on selectivity and filtering positions them as epistemic gatekeepers rather than facilitators of open exploration. This role contrasts sharply with constructivist and learner-centered paradigms commonly promoted in digital pedagogy, where autonomy and exploration are seen as core learning values. In the pesantren context, autonomy is deliberately postponed until students are considered morally and intellectually prepared. This finding contributes to the literature by illustrating how digital literacy can be redefined as a graduated competence, contingent upon ethical maturity rather than chronological age or technological exposure.

Third, the implementation of digital literacy further confirms that pesantren operationalize technology pragmatically rather than ideologically. Digital tools are used to support teaching clarity, administrative efficiency, and limited technical skill acquisition, but they are never allowed to redefine the pedagogical hierarchy. Teachers remain central knowledge authorities, printed texts and classical references remain epistemic anchors, and digital media function as supplementary instruments. This finding resonates with studies on technology adoption in conservative or value-based educational institutions, where innovation is selectively integrated without displacing core traditions.

Notably, digital literacy implementation is more intensive at the institutional and administrative levels than at the student learning level. This asymmetry suggests that pesantren distinguish clearly between organizational efficiency and educational formation. While digital systems are embraced to improve governance, transparency, and communication with parents, student exposure remains limited and purpose-driven. This reinforces the idea that pesantren conceptualize digital literacy not as a cultural ecosystem to be inhabited, but as a tool to be controlled.

Taken together, the three findings point to a contextualized model of digital literacy that differs fundamentally from mainstream models. Digital literacy in this pesantren is not framed around access, participation, or creativity, but around authority, ethics, and responsibility. Teachers serve as mediators who translate digital knowledge into pesantren-compatible forms, ensuring that technological engagement does not undermine disciplinary structures or moral objectives. This model can be understood as a form of ethical digital literacy, where competence is inseparable from value orientation.

From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to the growing body of research that critiques the universality of digital literacy frameworks. It demonstrates that digital literacy is not merely a set of transferable skills, but a socially negotiated practice shaped by institutional values, religious worldviews, and pedagogical traditions. In Islamic boarding schools, digital literacy is reconfigured to serve the preservation of moral authority and epistemic continuity rather than disruption and experimentation.

Practically, these findings suggest that policy interventions promoting digital literacy in pesantren contexts should avoid imposing standardized models that prioritize access and autonomy without regard for institutional philosophy. Instead, professional development programs for teachers should focus on strengthening their role as ethical mediators of digital

knowledge, equipping them not only with technical skills but also with critical filtering capacities aligned with pesantren values.

In conclusion, the discussion underscores that digital literacy in pesantren is neither absent nor regressive, but deliberately curated. Pesantren such as Ar-Raudlatul Hasanah exemplify how religious educational institutions actively negotiate modernity, adopting digital tools while resisting epistemic and moral dislocation. This negotiated approach offers an alternative paradigm for understanding digital literacy in faith-based education, one that foregrounds ethics, authority, and long-term character formation over immediate technological immersion.

4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that digital literacy in Pesantren Ar-Raudlatul Hasanah is constructed through a distinctive educational logic that prioritizes moral authority, pedagogical control, and institutional values over unrestricted technological access. Rather than positioning digital literacy as an individual competence to be freely acquired by students, the pesantren frames it as a mediated resource managed primarily by teachers within a structured and value-oriented educational system. This positioning reflects a conscious pedagogical choice to integrate digital developments without disrupting the foundational principles of pesantren education.

The findings reveal that teachers play a central role as epistemic and ethical mediators of digital knowledge. Their perceptions of digital literacy are shaped by reflective tensions between the demands of educational modernization and the responsibility to safeguard students' moral and intellectual formation. Digital literacy is thus perceived not merely as a technical skill but as a form of knowledge that requires filtering, contextualization, and alignment with pesantren values. This perception reinforces the role of teachers as custodians of scholarly authority in an era characterized by information abundance and diminishing expertise.

In terms of implementation, digital literacy is operationalized selectively and pragmatically. Technology is employed to support instructional clarity, professional development, and institutional management, while direct student engagement with digital tools remains limited and supervised. Such an approach demonstrates how pesantren modernize their administrative and pedagogical practices without transforming digital technology into the dominant learning culture among students.

Overall, this research contributes to broader discussions on digital literacy by highlighting its contextual and value-laden nature. It challenges universalized models of digital literacy that emphasize openness and autonomy, offering instead an alternative framework rooted in ethical mediation and pedagogical responsibility. The study suggests that policies and programs aimed at strengthening digital literacy in pesantren contexts should focus on enhancing teachers' critical and ethical capacities, ensuring that technological integration supports, rather than undermines, the moral and educational objectives of Pesantren.

5. REFERENCES

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