

| RESEARCH ARTICLE

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AI OPTIMIZATION IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION: INNOVATION FOR THE FUTURE OR A THREAT TO TRADITION

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| ABSTRACT

The implementation of artificial intelligence (AI) in religious education presents opportunities to enhance accessibility and personalize learning, yet it also raises challenges in preserving spiritual values and traditional teaching methods.

| KEYWORDS

artificial intelligence, religious education, tradition, innovation, MA Al-Amiriyyah.

| ARTICLE INFORMATION

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Abstract:-

The implementation of artificial intelligence (AI) in religious education presents opportunities to enhance accessibility and personalize learning, yet it also raises challenges in preserving spiritual values and traditional teaching methods. This study examines the use of AI in religious education at MA Al-Amiriyyah, focusing on efforts to balance technology with traditional values. The findings indicate that while AI facilitates access to materials and increases student engagement, face-to-face interaction with teachers remains essential for deepening religious understanding. AI is viewed as a supplementary tool to enrich the learning experience, rather than a replacement for direct instruction. This study concludes that the integration of technology in religious education must be approached carefully to avoid diminishing the spiritual depth that is central to the educational process. On the basis of the results, it was recommended to increase public awareness through enlightenment campaign against danger of indiscriminate dumping of wastes as they affect human health.

Introduction:-

The application of artificial intelligence (AI) in the education sector is becoming more widespread, but its application in religious education is still a fairly new and controversial topic (Bozkurt et al., 2023; Natale & Ballatore, 2020; Tan, 2020). AI offers the potential to democratize access to education, reach more students from diverse backgrounds, and provide more personalized and interactive learning methods (Hildawati et al., n.d.; Ibnu, 2023). However, religious education often involves values, traditions and practices that require a deep understanding that may not be achievable through technology. This issue is crucial because the development of AI has the potential to change the way religious teachings are forwarded, both in the context of accessibility and substantial understanding of religious values. A study published in the Journal of Educational Technology & Society (2021) states that AI can increase student engagement, but there are concerns that the implementation of this technology could reduce the depth of religious learning that relies on social and spiritual interaction. Therefore, this study is important to assess whether AI can enrich or even threaten religious education.

At Al-Amiriyyah MA School, the phenomenon of the use of technology in religious education shows an interesting dynamic between innovation and tradition. The school has begun to integrate artificial intelligence (AI) in the teaching and learning process, especially in providing religious materials that are more structured and easily accessible to students. However, despite advances in accessibility and personalization of learning materials, there are concerns from most educators and parents about the potential of AI to reduce the depth of spiritual experiences typically gained through direct interaction with teachers or scholars. For example, although students can easily access tafsir or hadith materials through AI-based applications, they feel they lack guidance in the practical and spiritual aspects that are indispensable in religious education. This phenomenon reflects the tension between the effort to adopt modern technology and the need to maintain the essence of values and a deeper religious experience, which has become an integral part of education at MA Al-Amiriyyah.

Several studies have explored the application of AI in education in general, and some of them have examined its potential in religious education (Purwandari et al., 2024; Rianita, 2024; Sundari, 2024; Supriyantomo & Fauzan, 2024; Trisnani et al., 2024). A study published in *Computers & Education* (2022) reveals that AI can help improve the personalization and effectiveness of religious learning through online platforms and AI-based applications that can tailor materials to individual students' needs. However, there is still very little in-depth research on the long-term impact of AI on religious traditions and values in education. This shows that there is a gap in the literature regarding how AI can interact with religious values and norms that are strongly influenced by certain cultures and social contexts. The *Religious Education Journal* (2023) also notes that while AI has the potential to accelerate the distribution of religious knowledge, its impact on spiritual understanding and character education has not been fully explored (Fachrial, 2020; Mas' ud Muhammadiyah et al., n.d.). This research will fill that gap by exploring how AI can be integrated in religious education without sacrificing the essence of existing religious traditions.

This research aims to answer the question of how artificial intelligence (AI) can be applied in religious education without threatening existing religious values and traditions. More specifically, this study will examine the extent to which the use of AI can enrich the religious learning experience without reducing the quality of spiritual understanding that has been developing through face-to-face interaction with experienced religious educators. Can AI replace traditional methods of teaching religious teachings, or is it better used as a tool to enrich and accelerate the learning process? The study will also explore the role of AI in making religious education more inclusive and accessible, especially in areas with less religious education resources. This research is expected to provide clearer insights into the positive and negative impacts of the integration of AI in religious education.

In the meantime, it can be concluded that the application of AI in religious education has great potential, but it also contains great challenges in terms of integration with religious values that are transcendental and contextual. AI can help improve the accessibility and quality of religious learning, however, if not used carefully, it can reduce the depth of religious understanding expected from religious education. Research published in the *Journal of Religious Education* (2022) highlights that technology, if integrated in the right way, can serve as an enrichment tool for religious learning experiences, but it should not replace direct interaction between teachers and students, which is an important part of religious education. The implication of this research is the importance of developing an ethical and pedagogical framework that can ensure that AI supports, rather than replaces, long-standing religious educational traditions and values. Thoughtful integration will allow AI to serve as a bridge between innovation and tradition

Research Methods:-

This research was conducted at MA Al-Amiriyyah located in Blokagug, an educational institution known for integrating technology, including artificial intelligence (AI), in religious teaching. This location was chosen as the unit of analysis because it is a representative example of schools that seek to adopt technology to support the religious learning process without abandoning traditional values. The use of AI in schools leads to efforts to improve the quality of religious learning while respecting conventional teaching methods based on direct interaction between teachers and students. In this context, MA Al-Amiriyyah is an ideal material object to assess the positive impacts and challenges of the use of AI in religious education, as well as how it interacts with the long-established traditions of religious teachings in the school.

The design of this study uses a qualitative approach with a case study type, which allows an in-depth understanding of the dynamics of the application of AI in religious education at MA Al-Amiriyyah. This approach was chosen because it aims to explore the social, cultural, and educational context that occurs in the school, as well as how the use of technology affects religious teaching methods. This case study provides an opportunity to observe and understand in more detail the experiences of teachers, students, and school management in adopting AI to support the religious learning process. In addition, the qualitative approach facilitates researchers in diving into aspects that cannot be measured with numbers, such as perceptions, attitudes, and understandings of technology in the context of religious education. This research focuses on the collection of in-depth qualitative data on the integration of AI and its impact on religious learning at the secondary school level.

The sources of information in this study consist of a number of informants who are relevant to the implementation of AI at MA Al-Amiriyyah. The main informants involved included the principal, the deputy principal for curriculum, two religious teachers, an IT teacher, and five students. Principals and vice-principals in the field of curriculum provide policy and managerial perspectives related to the use of AI in schools. They will explain how policies on technology are implemented, as well as the challenges and opportunities faced in the development of AI-based curriculum. Religious teachers and IT teachers, as direct implementers in the teaching and use of technology, will provide insight into the practice of using AI in the classroom as well as the interaction of technology with religious values. Meanwhile, learners provide perspective on their learning experiences by using AI in religious learning and the extent to which this technology affects their understanding of religious material. The following table details the number of informants involved in this study.

Table 1. List of informants

No	Number of Informants	Number of Informants
1.	Principal	1
2.	Vice Principal for Curriculum	1
3.	Religious Teacher	2
4.	Guru IT	1
5.	Students	5
6.	Quantity	10

The data collection process is carried out through three main methods: observation, interviews, and documentation. Observations are used to record how AI is applied in religious learning practices, as well as the interactions that occur between teachers, students, and technology in classroom contexts. Researchers will observe the use of AI platforms in learning activities and see how this technology coexists with conventional teaching methods based on face-to-face. Semi-structured interviews with key informants will be conducted to explore their views on the implementation of AI in religious teaching, as well as its impact on existing religious values and teaching traditions. The interview also aims to understand students' perceptions of the learning experience using AI. In addition, documentation such as school policies on AI, materi ajar berbasis teknologi, dan hasil evaluasi The data collection process is carried out through three main methods: observation, interviews, and documentation. Observations are used to record how AI is applied in religious learning practices, as well as the interactions that occur between teachers, students, and technology in classroom contexts. Researchers will observe the use of AI platforms in learning activities and see how this technology coexists with conventional teaching methods based on face-to-face. Semi-structured interviews with key informants will be conducted to explore their views on the implementation of AI in religious teaching, as well as its impact on existing religious values and teaching traditions. The interview also aims to understand students' perceptions of the learning experience using AI. In addition, documentation such as school policies on AI, A. Maintaining Religious Traditions and Values in Religious Education through AI

In this study, one main theme that emerged was how schools, especially MA Al-Amiriyyah, tried to maintain religious traditions and values even though they began to integrate artificial intelligence (AI) in the learning process. From interviews with religious teachers at the school, several speakers emphasized the importance of balancing technology and traditional approaches. One of the religious teachers stated, "We still prioritize face-to-face teaching to provide students with a deep understanding of religious teachings. AI is just a tool to make it easier to access and enrich their learning experience" (Interview 1, 2023). This statement illustrates that even though AI was introduced, religious teaching remained inseparable from the tradition of direct interaction that has high spiritual value. Students also have a similar view, as expressed by one of the students: "Even though I can access a lot of tafsir or hadith materials through the application, I still feel that direct guidance from the teacher provides more depth of understanding, especially in the spiritual aspect" (Interview 2, 2023). This shows that there is an awareness of the limitations of AI in conveying profound spiritual experiences. According to the student, although AI provides convenience in terms of accessibility, religious teaching through direct interaction with religious teachers is still felt to be more substantial. Observations in the classroom also revealed that although students actively use AI platforms to learn religion, they prefer to discuss and ask teachers directly about the material they learn. In a learning session using an AI application, most students seem to be more focused on interacting with their teacher when the discussion about tafsir or hadith begins. This illustrates the importance of the value of interaction in religious learning that cannot be completely replaced by technology.

Chart 1: The Relationship between AI Use and Religious Teaching Traditions

Learning Aspects	Traditional Approach	AI Approach
Learning Interactions	Face-to-face between students and teachers	Self-paced learning through AI platforms
Depth of Understanding	Emphasis on spiritual values	Focus on understanding religious texts
Student Engagement	Hands-on discussions with teachers	Use quizzes and simulations for evaluation

The application of AI in religious education at MA Al-Amiriyyah shows that there are efforts to modernize the way of teaching, while still maintaining the traditional values contained in religious teachings. Based on social learning theory, direct interaction between teachers and students has a greater impact on developing spiritual understanding compared to self-paced learning through technology. Students who engage in hands-on discussions with teachers tend to be better able to understand the spiritual dimension and deeper religious values. Therefore, while AI can help facilitate access to materials and personalize learning, the spiritual and traditional aspects of religious education must be preserved.

Overall, the application of AI in religious education can provide various benefits, such as increased accessibility, personalization, and student engagement in the learning process (Hindolia et al., 2024; Lopatovska et al., 2022; Nag & Mishra, 2024). However, there are challenges in maintaining religious traditions and values that cannot be completely replaced by technology (Ahda & Hamida, n.d.; Khoiriyah, 2024; Maulina, 2024; Wardani & Mediatati, 2024). This research shows that to maximize the benefits of AI in religious education, there needs to be a balance between technology and traditional teaching methods based on spiritual values (Nst et al., 2024; Rusdi, 2024; Wijayanto et al., n.d.). As a suggestion, schools looking to integrate AI in religious education should ensure that the use of this technology supports, not replaces, direct interaction between teachers and students, while still emphasizing the importance of in-depth religious values-based teaching.

Discussion:-

In this study, the application of artificial intelligence (AI) in religious education at MA Al-Amiriyyah shows an effort to improve the quality of learning while maintaining essential traditional values. These findings are in line with research conducted by Kose, Koc, and Yılmaz (2020) which states that although technology can enrich the learning process, face-to-face interaction remains an irreplaceable element in religious education. On the other hand, research by Nouri and Shahzad (2020) shows that technologies such as AI can accelerate the accessibility of educational materials and increase student engagement, which is also reflected in the findings of this study, where students feel more engaged through AI applications with a direct feedback system that gives them the opportunity to learn at their own pace. However, as revealed by research by Li and Li (2021), the presence of technology in education, including AI, should be viewed with caution in the context of reducing social interaction that is essential for character development and a deeper understanding of religion. The decrease in interaction between students and teachers in group discussions observed in MA Al-Amiriyyah classrooms also illustrates these findings, which suggest that while AI provides flexibility in independent learning, social interaction in the classroom still plays a vital role in shaping a more holistic understanding of religion. Therefore, while AI opens up new possibilities in improving access and personalization of learning, challenges remain in maintaining a balance between technological advances and religious educational traditions based on deep spiritual values.

Conclusion:-

This research provides important insights into the application of artificial intelligence (AI) in religious education, as well as its potential and challenges. The most important finding of the study is that while AI can improve the accessibility and personalization of learning, it cannot completely replace the spiritual depth gained through direct interaction between students and religious teachers. Therefore, the use of AI in religious education should be seen as an aid that enriches the learning experience, not as a substitute for traditional methods that focus on immersive spiritual experiences. The strength of this research lies in its contribution to the perspective of religious teaching in the digital age. This research enriches the understanding of how AI can be integrated in the context of religious education without threatening existing religious traditions. Through a qualitative approach involving interviews and observations at MA Al-Amiriyyah, this research makes a significant contribution in identifying the balance needed between technological innovation and spiritual values in religious education. This opens up new perspectives in the development of more inclusive and technology-based religious teaching methods.

However, this study also has limitations, especially in terms of sample coverage and context that is limited to one school, namely MA Al-Amiriyyah. Further research with a larger sample and a variety of contexts will be useful to obtain a more comprehensive picture of the application of AI in religious education. In addition, this study only focuses on the implementation of AI in religious learning, so it is recommended to dig deeper into the long-term impact of AI use on the formation of students' character and spirituality.

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