

## Intelligent Character Islamic Education Teachers in Fostering Digital Civility

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### ABSTRACT

The rapid development of digital technology has transformed the educational landscape, presenting both opportunities and challenges for Islamic education. One of the main challenges is fostering digital civility polite, ethical, and responsible behavior in cyberspace that aligns with the principles of *adab* in Islam. This study aims to analyze the role of intelligent character Islamic education teachers in shaping students' digital civility, as well as to formulate relevant guidance strategies in the digital era. The method employed is library research with a qualitative approach, utilizing classical and contemporary literature from primary and secondary sources selected based on strict inclusion and exclusion criteria. Analysis was conducted through descriptive analytical methods, content analysis, and philosophical hermeneutics. The findings indicate that Islamic education teachers who integrate intellectual, emotional, social, and spiritual intelligence can serve as role models and mentors in instilling *adab* values in the digital space. Effective strategies include integrating Islamic values with digital literacy in the curriculum, implementing creative project based learning, and providing continuous guidance in addressing students' online ethical dilemmas. The identified challenges include the digital literacy gap between teachers and students, institutional barriers, and the overwhelming flow of negative content. This study affirms that fostering digital civility requires a combination of technical competence, moral spiritual guidance, and ongoing collaboration among schools, families, and communities.

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## Introduction

Education is the primary instrument in shaping the human personality in a holistic manner, encompassing intellectual, moral, spiritual, and social dimensions. From the perspective of Islamic education, the goal of learning is not only to produce academically intelligent students but also to cultivate virtuous individuals (*khuluq al karim*). This aligns with the hadith of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him): "Indeed, I was sent to perfect noble character" (Narrated by al Bukhari). Syed

Muhammad Naquib Al Attas (1999) articulated this mission through the concept of *ta'dib*, namely the cultivation of moral responsibility toward oneself, society, and Allah SWT.

However, the rapid advancement of information technology in the digital era has introduced new challenges in preserving values of civility. The phenomenon of an ethical crisis among the younger generation has become a serious concern. The Microsoft Digital Civility Index (2020) ranked Indonesia as having the lowest level of digital politeness in Southeast Asia. This is reinforced by data from the Coordinating Ministry for Political, Legal, and Security Affairs (Luxiana, 2024), which reported that Indonesia ranked fourth in the world for cases of child pornography content, with the majority of perpetrators and victims aged 12–14. Although based on industry and media reports, these findings indicate the urgent need for digital ethics education from an early age, particularly through the role of Islamic education teachers.

This situation reveals a gap between the vision of national education as mandated by Law No. 20 of 2003 to develop individuals who are faithful, pious, and of noble character and the actual behavior of the younger generation in the digital sphere (Rosyad & Maarif, 2020). Character education in schools still tends to focus on cognitive achievement, thus failing to fully address the complex moral challenges of the digital age.

In this context, Islamic education teachers hold a strategic role, not only as *mu'allim* (instructors) but also as *murabbi* (educators), *mursyid* (mentors), and *uswah* (role models). Intelligent character Islamic education teachers are those who integrate intellectual, emotional, social, and spiritual intelligence (Gunawan & Wahyudi, 2020; Suresman, 2020), thereby guiding students to uphold civility both in the real world and in the digital sphere.

Previous studies have emphasized the importance of fostering digital civility based on Islamic values. Ayu et al. (2022) demonstrated that digital citizenship grounded in Islamic principles can enhance students' awareness of online ethics. Munawwaroh and Mulyadi (2021) asserted that the professionalism of Islamic education teachers plays a significant role in shaping Islamic character in the digital era, although limited digital literacy remains a challenge. However, previous studies have generally been partial, lacking a comprehensive exploration of the integration between scholarly competence, exemplary conduct, and pedagogical strategies of Islamic education teachers as a unified model for sustainable digital civility education.

Based on this background, this study aims to analyze the role of intelligent character teachers in fostering students' digital civility in the digital era, and to formulate effective, relevant, and sustainable implementation strategies within the context of Islamic education in Indonesia.

## **Theoretical Framework**

### **Ta'dib in Islamic Education**

The concept of *ta'dib* formulated by Syed Muhammad Naquib Al Attas positions education as a process of forming an *insan adabi* (civilized person), which encompasses not only the transfer of knowledge but also the inculcation of *adab* as a moral and spiritual orientation (Al Attas, 1980). He asserts that knowledge must be placed within a value framework so that its use is directed toward the common good; conversely, knowledge without *adab* is prone to misuse, while *adab* without knowledge loses direction. This perspective aligns with Al Ghazali's ideas in *Ihya' Ulumuddin* and Ibn Miskawaih's *Tahdzib al Akhlaq*, which emphasize the close relationship between knowledge, morality, and responsibility to Allah SWT (Al Ghazali, 2011; Ibn Miskawaih, 1968).

In the context of the digital era, the *ta'dib* principle becomes highly relevant. The massive availability of information demands moral orientation so that technology is used for beneficial rather than destructive purposes. For Islamic education teachers, *ta'dib* frames every digital activity such as posting, commenting, or sharing information as a moral act with consequences equivalent to actions in the physical world (Sassi, 2018). Therefore, value based learning in Islamic education should internalize *adab* norms alongside technical digital literacy skills.

Furthermore, the application of *ta'dib* requires the involvement of all educational stakeholders: schools, teachers, families, and religious communities. Approaches that focus solely on the technical mastery of technology, without strengthening moral values, have proven less effective in reducing unethical behavior in online spaces (Dewi et al., 2024). Recent studies show that the *ta'dib* concept can be operationalized through curriculum integration that combines digital literacy, value education, and Islamic ethics, such as digital da'wah programs, Islamic media consumption guidelines, and the habituation of public *adab* on the internet (Adkha & Nasikha, 2023).

### **Character Education Theory**

The character education theory developed by Thomas Lickona emphasizes three main components: moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action (Lickona, 2012). Together, these form a comprehensive pedagogical framework in which students must understand values (knowing), feel their urgency (feeling), and habituate behaviors aligned with those values (action). In the digital realm, this framework can be translated into understanding online ethics such as privacy protection, copyright compliance, and information verification; fostering empathy toward other users; and cultivating positive behaviors such as refusing to spread hoaxes or hate speech (Berkowitz & Bier, 2005).

The effectiveness of character education requires contextual and interactive learning strategies. Approaches such as case studies, simulations, role plays, and problem based projects encourage students not only to understand values but also to practice them (Ryan & Bohlin, 1999). In Islamic education learning, for example, teachers can use case studies on the spread of false

news as material for ethical discussions or invite students to create Islamic themed digital content as a group project (Nucci & Narvaez, 2008).

Digital literacy based character education policies have been adopted by many countries as part of 21<sup>st</sup> century citizenship competencies, in line with international standards such as the ISTE Standards and Digital Citizenship Curriculum (ISTE, 2020). In Indonesia, the Character Education Strengthening (PPK) policy provides opportunities for teachers to integrate religious values with digital skills (Kemendikbud, 2017). However, recent literature reminds us that the success of digital character education programs largely depends on teacher competence and program continuity rather than one off interventions (Berkowitz & Bier, 2005).

### **The Concept of Intelligent Character**

The concept of intelligent character integrates intellectual, emotional, social, and spiritual intelligence as operational competencies required by 21<sup>st</sup> century educators, including Islamic education teachers (Gunawan & Wahyudi, 2020). In the digital sphere, intellectual intelligence enables teachers to assess the credibility of information sources and teach critical literacy to students; emotional intelligence supports emotion regulation and empathy in online interactions; social intelligence facilitates healthy collaborative communication; and spiritual intelligence links digital activities to religious values as a moral compass (Goleman, 2006; Trilling & Fadel, 2009).

The implementation of intelligent character can be realized through project based learning for creating Islamic content, ongoing digital mentoring, the use of character assessment rubrics in online assignments, and cross subject collaboration to strengthen students' digital ethics (Prensky, 2010; Ribble, 2015). Empirical studies indicate that project based approaches combined with mentoring improve teacher self efficacy and student engagement in practicing digital civility (Supriyadi et al., 2022).

Recent literature also highlights the importance of mastering Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) for teachers so that the integration of technology and values is effective (Ramidi & Hikmah, 2024). Professional development models such as MOST (Mentoring, Observation, Support, and Targeted Action) are relevant for sustainably building intelligent character capacity among Islamic education teachers. With synergy between personal competencies, institutional support, and educational policies, Islamic education teachers can translate theory into effective learning practices for fostering students' digital civility (Reksiana, 2024).

### **Method**

This study employs a qualitative approach using the library research method to explore meaning, understand context, and interpret the philosophical and pedagogical values related to the

role of Islamic education teachers in fostering students' digital civility (Creswell, 2014). This method was chosen because the research focus is conceptual–normative, making it more appropriate to analyze through literature studies rather than context specific field research. Library research allows the researcher to obtain broad perspectives, deep synthesis, and cross context relevance within Islamic education in Indonesia.

Data were obtained from primary sources, including seminal works of Islamic education scholars such as *Tahdzib al Akhlāq* by Ibn Miskawayh, *Ihya Ulumuddin* by Al Ghazali, the *ta'dib* concept by Syed Muhammad Naquib Al Attas, character education theory by Lickona, and official documents such as Law No. 20 of 2003. Secondary sources included reputable journal articles, academic books, official documents, and research reports. Non academic sources, such as industry reports (Microsoft, 2020) and media news (Luxiana, 2024), were used selectively to provide context on current phenomena, rather than as primary empirical evidence, and all findings were validated through academic literature.

In total, this study analyzed 38 literature sources, consisting of five primary sources (classical works and official documents) and 33 secondary sources (indexed journal articles, contemporary scholarly books, and research reports). Data analysis was conducted through literature searches in reputable databases, selection according to inclusion–exclusion criteria, collection of key quotations and concepts, thematic coding (e.g., *ta'dib*, intelligent character, guidance strategies), grouping into major categories, and synthesizing findings into a conceptual model validated through cross referencing between sources to ensure consistency and relevance.

## Result

### **The Role of Intelligent Character Islamic education Teachers in Fostering Students' Digital Civility**

The role of intelligent character Islamic education teachers is pivotal in addressing the challenge of declining digital civility among today's younger generation. Literature reviews indicate that the low level of digital politeness in Indonesia is a serious concern. The Microsoft Digital Civility Index (2020) ranked Indonesia at the lowest position in Southeast Asia, while data from the Coordinating Ministry for Political, Legal, and Security Affairs (Luxiana, 2024) revealed that Indonesia ranks fourth globally in cases of child pornography content, with the majority of perpetrators and victims aged 12–14. These facts suggest that character development in the digital space cannot be separated from the role of educators who carry a moral and spiritual mandate.

Intelligent character Islamic education teachers can bridge the gap between technological proficiency and the internalization of Islamic values. By connecting religious subject matter to current digital phenomena for example, discussing ethics in social media comments during *akhlaq al karimah* lessons teachers can cultivate moral awareness that is highly relevant to digital natives

(Munawwaroh & Mulyadi, 2021; Ramidi & Hikmah, 2024). Findings from both classical and contemporary literature show that this conceptual foundation aligns with the *ta'dib* articulated by Syed Muhammad Naquib Al Attas (1999), namely the cultivation of moral and spiritual awareness to understand humanity's position in the world, avoid reprehensible behavior, and fulfill the trust of being Allah's vicegerent (*khalifah*). This principle resonates with Lickona's (2012) view that holistic character education encompasses moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action, which, in the digital context, translates into understanding online ethics, feeling empathy toward other users, and practicing civility even in anonymous spaces.

The role of Islamic education teachers in nurturing digital civility is inseparable from their capacity as intelligent character educators. Islamic education teachers serve a strategic function not only as *mu'allim* (instructors) but also as *murabbi* (moral and spiritual educators), *mursyid* (mentors), and *uswah* (role models). This role demands the integration of four aspects of intelligence intellectual, emotional, social, and spiritual that guide teachers in shaping students' digital behavior to align with Islamic *adab* principles (Gunawan & Wahyudi, 2020; Hasanah, Asbari, & Wardah, 2024).

Intellectual intelligence enables teachers to master religious subject matter and relate it to contemporary issues; emotional intelligence fosters empathy and conflict management skills; social intelligence equips teachers to be effective communicators in school and community contexts; while spiritual intelligence serves as the value based foundation that aligns intentions and actions with divine principles (Gunawan & Wahyudi, 2020; Lase, Nirwana, Neviyarni, & Marjohan, 2020; Hasanah, Asbari, & Wardah, 2024). Through the integration of these four dimensions, teachers do not merely transmit knowledge but also embody moral exemplars whom students can rely on when navigating ethical challenges in the digital era.

Empirical evidence also supports the importance of the intelligent character model in fostering digital civility. Lase, Nirwana, Neviyarni, and Marjohan (2020) found that implementing this model can enhance students' honesty a core value highly relevant in online interactions, whether in sharing information or respecting copyright. El Rahman (2023) affirmed that integrating Islamic values into the character formation of pre service teachers builds the moral and spiritual readiness of educators, which is later realized in their student guidance practices.

The implementation of this role is evident in the digital conduct of Islamic education teachers: exhibiting courteous online behavior, being selective in sharing information, actively educating about social media ethics, and maintaining professional boundaries in personal content (Rochim & Khayati, 2022). Munawwaroh and Mulyadi (2021) emphasized that teachers who connect their lessons to current digital realities are more effective in building students' ethical awareness than conventional methods disconnected from the digital environment. In this regard,

teachers also ensure that content shared on social media aligns with Islamic values while leveraging online platforms for *dakwah* and character education (Rochim & Khayati, 2022). Teachers thus act as agents of change rather than passive technology users.

In conclusion, the findings affirm that the role of intelligent character Islamic education teachers extends beyond delivering religious subject matter. It also includes fostering digital civility through: (1) contextual teaching that connects Islamic values with students' digital realities; (2) consistent online role modeling that aligns with the values taught; and (3) technological adaptability to engage students on the platforms they use. This combination enables Islamic education teachers to shape students' digital mindsets and behaviors sustainably (Gunawan & Wahyudi, 2020; Lase et al., 2020; Hasanah et al., 2024), laying the foundation for a generation that is cultured both in the real world and in cyberspace.

### **Strategies for Effectively Cultivating Digital Civility in Islamic education Learning**

A review of the literature indicates that effective cultivation of digital civility requires an integrated strategy encompassing curriculum design, teaching methods, and teacher role modeling as key components of 21<sup>st</sup> century education (Dahnial et al., 2023; Juhaidi et al., 2023). This strategy is particularly relevant in addressing the challenges of education in the digital era, especially within Islamic education, which carries a moral and spiritual mandate (Dahnial et al., 2023; Juhaidi et al., 2023). Three main pillars can serve as a reference for implementation:

1. Curriculum Integration; Linking the teachings of the Qur'an and Hadith with social media ethics, such as the prohibition of *ghibah* (QS. Al Hujurat: 12) and slander (HR. Muslim). This integration enables students to understand that Islamic teachings apply not only in the physical world but also in the digital realm (Ayu et al., 2022).
2. Project Based Learning; Engaging students in creating positive digital campaigns, such as *dakwah* videos or digital literacy posters that combine religious messages with creative design (Putri & Setyowati, 2021).
3. Continuous Mentoring; Organizing regular discussions outside class hours to address online ethical dilemmas students face directly, allowing teachers to provide relevant and contextual solutions (Richter, Carlos, & Beber, 2015).

Non academic mentoring also plays an important role. Richter, Carlos, and Beber (2015) show that counseling services are effective in developing resilient character among young people. This approach can be adapted to the digital sphere through online ethics counseling, helping students cope with social media pressures and guiding them toward wise decision making.

In the context of Islamic education, these strategies can be applied through integrating moral values into every lesson. For example, discussions on *ghibah* can be linked to the phenomenon of cyberbullying, while lessons on *tabayyun* can be related to fact checking practices

before sharing information on social media (Ayu et al., 2022). This approach aligns with the concept of *ta'dib* articulated by Syed Muhammad Naquib Al Attas (1980; 1999), which emphasizes that every educational process should aim to foster moral awareness, including in the use of technology.

Furthermore, Rochim and Khayati (2022) reveal that Islamic education teachers play a strategic role in shaping students' religious character in the digital era through a combination of religious instruction and the habituation of values in daily life. This practice can be combined with digital civility education to ensure that students are not only ritualistically observant but also well mannered in online interactions.

The Project Based Learning method has proven effective in internalizing digital civility values. Putri & Setyowati (2021) found that student involvement in morally themed digital campaign projects can enhance their awareness and sense of responsibility in digital spaces. This is reinforced by the views of Prensky (2010) and Ribble (2015), who emphasize that technology based learning becomes more meaningful when directed toward producing positive content. In practice, Islamic education teachers can utilize platforms such as Google Classroom, Padlet, or educational social media to convey moral messages in a contextual manner (Ramidi & Hikmah, 2024).

Additionally, Rosyad and Maarif (2020) highlight the importance of a democratic education paradigm combined with Islamic education in responding to globalization challenges. In the digital realm, this paradigm encourages students to actively participate in online public spaces while adhering to Islamic ethical principles, thereby fostering healthy, tolerant, and productive interactions.

Thus, strategies for cultivating digital civility in Islamic education should be designed as a combination of integrating religious values into the curriculum, employing creative and collaborative teaching methods, and providing continuous mentoring that reinforces ethical habits in digital spaces. This approach not only enhances students' digital literacy but also strengthens their moral and spiritual identity amid the rapid flow of global information.

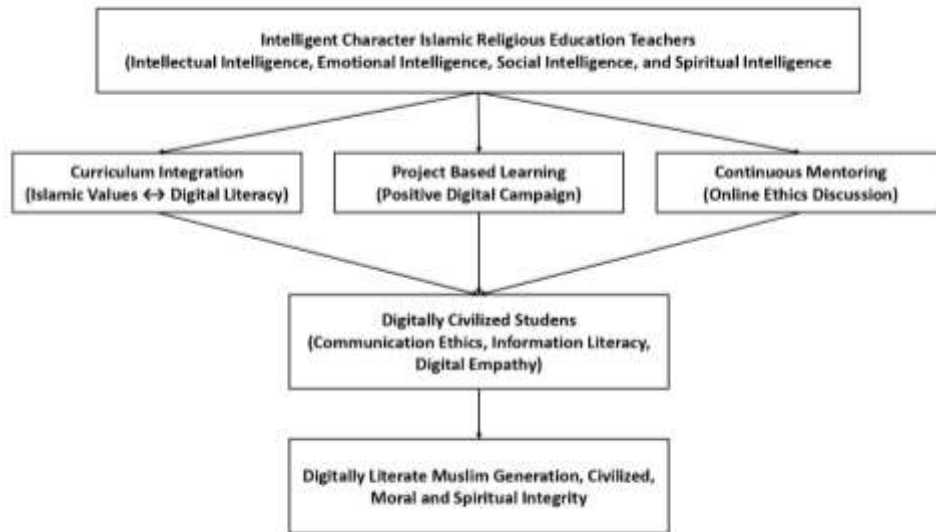


Figure 1. Conceptual framework of the role of intelligent character Islamic education teachers in cultivating digital civility

### Challenges and Opportunities in Cultivating Digital Civility in the Digital Era

The success of cultivating digital civility through Islamic education cannot be separated from a number of challenges faced in the field. One of the main obstacles is the digital literacy gap between teachers and students. Some Islamic education teachers still struggle to operate digital platforms or understand the social media algorithms that influence students' online behavior (Dahnial et al., 2023). This situation becomes even more complex when some teachers show resistance to change, believing that conventional methods are sufficient, while some students perceive Islamic education subjects as less relevant to their digital lives (Juhaidi et al., 2023).

To overcome these obstacles, a persuasive and dialogical approach is needed, in which teachers not only deliver material but also listen to students' digital experiences and connect them with Islamic principles (Juhaidi et al., 2023; Dahnial et al., 2023; Ayu et al., 2022). In this way, the values taught feel relevant, contextual, and applicable to students' lives.

Institutional support is also a key factor in success. Schools need to provide Islamic values based digital literacy training for teachers, establish policies for digital device use in the school environment, and involve students in drafting these rules (Susanto & Budimansyah, 2022). Student involvement in this process not only increases their sense of ownership over the rules but also strengthens a healthy and inclusive digital culture.

Program sustainability is both a challenge and an urgent necessity. Strengthening digital civility should not be incidental or merely reactive to viral cases but should be designed as a systematic, measurable program that is evaluated regularly (Berkowitz & Bier, 2005). Evaluation

should not only assess students' knowledge of digital ethics but also observe changes in their behavior in both physical and digital spaces.

On the other hand, technological developments present opportunities for Islamic education teachers to utilize digital media as a means of *dakwah* and character building. School social media accounts can be used to share daily moral messages, while e learning platforms can serve as online discussion spaces about current digital phenomena connected to Islamic teachings (Zahrah & Dwiputra, 2023).

With the right strategy and adequate institutional support, Islamic education teachers have a great opportunity to prepare students to become competent and well mannered digital citizens (Susanto & Budimansyah, 2022; Berkowitz & Bier, 2005; Zahrah & Dwiputra, 2023). This approach not only equips them with technical skills but also instills a strong moral and spiritual identity, enabling them to face global challenges without losing the Islamic principles that form the foundation of their behavior.

## Discussion

The findings of this study affirm that digital civility is an urgent aspect requiring serious attention in Islamic education in schools. From the perspective of *ta'dib* as articulated by Syed Muhammad Naquib Al Attas (1980; 1999), Islamic education emphasizes the formation of morally and spiritually oriented individuals. This principle is highly relevant in the digital era, where the free flow of information can serve as a means of either benefit or harm, depending on the values underlying its use (Dewi et al., 2024; Adkha & Nasikha, 2023). These findings align with Sassi (2018), who stresses that the internalization of moral values in the digital space should be an integral part of religious education.

This study reinforces the findings of Ayu et al. (2022), which demonstrated that linking moral teachings such as the prohibition of *ghibah* (QS. Al Hujurat: 12) and the principle of *tabayyun* (HR. Muslim) with digital phenomena like cyberbullying and hoaxes can raise students' ethical awareness. The distinction lies in the fact that this study not only examines the increase in awareness but also explores implementation strategies that combine teacher role modeling, curriculum integration, and creative projects as instruments for fostering digital civility. In this sense, such cultivation can be seen as the actualization of classical Islamic values within the context of contemporary technology.

Consistent with Gunawan & Wahyudi (2020) and Munawwaroh & Mulyadi (2021), the results of this study affirm the strategic role of Islamic education teachers as *mu'allim*, *murabbi*, *mursyid*, and *uswah* who integrate intellectual, emotional, social, and spiritual intelligence (Goleman, 2006; Trilling & Fadel, 2009). However, unlike Munawwaroh & Mulyadi (2021), who

place greater emphasis on moral role modeling, this study shows that combining role modeling with technological adaptation produces more contextual learning for the digital native generation.

Challenges identified—such as the digital literacy gap between teachers and students, the limited availability of TPACK based training, and resistance to new methods (Ramidi & Hikmah, 2024; Dahniyal et al., 2023)—are consistent with the findings of Juhaidi et al. (2023). However, this study adds that such barriers can be addressed through a dialogical approach, where teachers listen to students' digital experiences and connect them to Islamic principles. This strategy has proven more effective in increasing engagement and ethical compliance compared to one way lectures.

The curriculum integration, project based learning, and continuous mentoring strategies derived from this study strengthen the findings of Putri & Setyowati (2021), who note that creative projects based on online ethics can enhance students' sense of responsibility. Unlike Putri & Setyowati, however, this study emphasizes that the effectiveness of these strategies is heightened when supported by institutional measures such as teacher training, device use policies, and collaboration with parents (Susanto & Budimansyah, 2022).

The practical implication of these findings is the need to reposition Islamic education learning as an applied form of education that integrates Islamic values, technology, and students' lived experiences. Multistakeholder collaboration among schools, families, religious organizations, and digital platforms is key to creating a sustainable ecosystem for cultivating digital civility (Zahrah & Dwiputra, 2023). In this way, digital civility development can serve as a proactive strategy for shaping a generation of Muslims who are intelligent, virtuous, and prepared to face global challenges.

## Conclusion

This study, which employs a library research approach, makes its primary contribution at the level of conceptual synthesis rather than empirical field findings. Through a critical analysis of classical and contemporary literature, it affirms that fostering digital civility within Islamic education is a strategic necessity amid rapid and complex technological developments. The concept of *ta'dib* as formulated by Syed Muhammad Naquib Al Attas serves as a strong philosophical foundation, positioning technological mastery within a moral and spiritual orientation. Islamic values such as the prohibition of *ghibah*, the principle of *tabayyun*, and ethical media usage function as guiding principles in shaping students' interactions in the digital sphere so that they align with the principles of *adab*.

The theoretical contribution of this study lies in mapping and integrating the concept of digital civility with the principles of *ta'dib*, resulting in a conceptual framework that can serve as a reference for developing Islamic based character education in the digital era. Its practical

contribution is the formulation of development strategies that include: (1) integrating Islamic values into the curriculum; (2) implementing creative project based learning; and (3) providing ongoing mentoring that is relevant to students' digital experiences.

The role of intelligent character Islamic education teachers those who integrate intellectual, emotional, social, and spiritual intelligence is key to the success of these strategies. Challenges such as the digital literacy gap among teachers, resistance to new methods, limited institutional support, and the overwhelming flow of negative content on social media require synergy among schools, families, communities, and policymakers. Implementing these strategies is expected to produce a generation of Muslims who are not only digitally competent but also civilized, ethical, and morally upright in accordance with Islamic teachings.

Further research is recommended to employ mixed methods approaches or field studies to test the implementation of digital civility development strategies based on intelligent character Islamic education teachers at various educational levels. In addition, piloting the development model through educational experiments could provide quantitative data that would strengthen the validity of the findings.

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