

The Use of Ai in Islamic Education and Digital Ethics Instruction for Students at Iai Al-Khairat Pamekasan

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ABSTRACT

The growing use of artificial intelligence (AI) in higher education raises serious ethical questions about academic integrity and students' digital morality. This study examines how students use AI in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning and its implications for their digital character (akhlak digital) at IAI Al-Khairat Pamekasan. Using a qualitative phenomenological approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation, and analyzed thematically. Findings reveal two patterns of AI use: as a cognitive learning tool and as a task-production tool. Although students generally perceive AI as ethically neutral, a clear gap exists between their normative values and actual practice. AI use has dynamic implications for students' digital character, simultaneously fostering digital literacy and undermining academic integrity when used without ethical reflection. Students also face three concrete ethical dilemmas: ambiguity about the limits of acceptable AI use, uncertainty about the authenticity of AI-assisted work, and tension between moral responsibility and efficiency pressures. The study concludes that AI does not directly determine the quality of students' digital character but functions as a testing ground for the internalization of Islamic values in digital contexts. PAI learning therefore needs to integrate digital ethics explicitly and contextually into its practice.

Keywords: Academic Integrity, Artificial Intelligence, Digital Character, Islamic Education, Phenomenology.

INTRODUCTION

The development of artificial intelligence (AI) in education has transformed the way students learn and engage with knowledge. Technologies like ChatGPT not only aid in understanding course material but are also used to instantly complete academic assignments. The efficiency offered by AI, however, comes with serious risks: academic misconduct and growing cognitive dependence as students lose their sense of ethical awareness (Dwivedi, Kshetri, Hughes, Slade, Wright, dkk., 2023). (Cotton dkk., 2023) emphasize that AI has created new challenges for academic integrity in higher education. This issue is not merely about technology; it directly touches on the moral dimension of students.

From a theoretical perspective, scholars are increasingly focusing on the ethics of AI use. (Bender dkk., 2021) demonstrate that large language models carry serious implications for the misuse of information if not accompanied by critical awareness. (Abuadas & Albikawi, 2026) emphasize that ethical awareness is necessary to uphold academic integrity and responsibility. (Kasneci dkk., 2023) add that the use of AI in learning must be balanced with digital ethics literacy so as not to encourage cheating. For Islamic Religious Education (PAI), this dimension is highly relevant: PAI is not only cognitively oriented but also focused on character development, including students' digital behavior.

In reality, students' use of AI has not been accompanied by sufficient ethical awareness. Many students use AI pragmatically without considering academic integrity or responsibility. (Tlili dkk., 2023) point out that the widespread use of ChatGPT blurs the line between technological assistance and academic misconduct. (Stokel-Walker & Van Noorden, 2023) note similar concerns regarding scientific integrity. Studies on digital ethics from an Islamic educational perspective, which are directly linked to the use of AI, remain very limited.

Previous research has left unanswered gaps. (Dwivedi, Kshetri, Hughes, Slade, Zolkepli, dkk., 2023) discuss the implications of AI in general without considering the context of religious education. (Cotton dkk., 2023) examine AI-based cheating without linking it to the development of moral values. (Bender dkk., 2021) operate on a global scale without addressing the context of local religious institutions. (Kasneci dkk., 2023) focus on AI's potential in learning, not on students' subjective experiences. (Kasneci dkk., 2023) develop an AI ethics framework but do not connect it to concrete learning practices. Overall, these studies are partial and have not fully integrated the use of AI, PAI learning, and the formation of digital ethics.

This study addresses this gap with a different approach. Specifically, this study examines the implications of AI use on students' digital ethics from an Islamic Education perspective. A qualitative approach was used to explore students' experiences, perceptions, and actual practices in depth. The research location at IAI Al-Khairat Pamekasan, as an Islamic religious university, contributes to context-based studies that have so far been rarely conducted.

The purpose of this study is to understand how students utilize AI in Islamic Education (PAI) and how this impacts the development of their digital ethics. Theoretically, this study contributes to the development of the concept of digital ethics in Islamic education. Practically, this study provides a foundation for instructors and institutions to design technology-adaptive learning without neglecting Islamic values, while also serving as a reference for addressing AI ethical challenges in higher education.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach with a phenomenological design. This approach was chosen because phenomenology allows researchers to explore the subjective meanings and direct experiences of students in using AI dimensions that cannot be captured through numerical data. The study was conducted at IAI Al-Khairat Pamekasan, with

participants being students in the Islamic Education Program who actively use AI in their learning.

Data was collected using three methods: in-depth interviews, limited participant observation, and documentation. Interviews served as the primary method for exploring students' experiences, perspectives, and reflections regarding the use of AI and its implications for digital behavior. Observation was used to directly observe the use of AI in academic activities, while documentation supplemented the data through relevant student assignments, notes, and digital activities.

Primary data was obtained from Islamic Education students selected through purposive sampling based on the criterion of actively using AI in their learning. Secondary data was sourced from supporting documents and relevant scientific literature. All data is qualitative in nature: interview transcripts, observation notes, and related documents.

Data analysis using thematic techniques involved three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. The data were coded to identify key themes regarding students' use of AI and digital ethics. Data validity was ensured through triangulation of sources and methods, as well as member checks with informants to verify the alignment between the researcher's interpretations and the participants' experiences.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Patterns of AI Use in Islamic Education

The use of AI has become an integral part of the learning practices of Islamic Education students at IAI Al-Khairat Pamekasan. Based on interviews, students generally use ChatGPT to understand course material, summarize readings, and quickly find references. In courses such as Aqidah Akhlak, AI is used to obtain simpler and more contextual explanations, making it a cognitive aid that supports the learning process. This finding aligns with (Zawacki-Richter dkk., 2019), who demonstrated that AI in education plays a role in supporting adaptive learning and personalized learning.

However, this study also found a significant shift in usage patterns. In many cases, AI is no longer used merely as a comprehension aid, but as a production tool: students compose answers directly from AI with only minimal editing. This pattern reflects a pragmatic orientation that prioritizes results over process. (Dwivedi, Kshetri, Hughes, Slade, Zolkepli, dkk., 2023) warn that generative AI presents both great opportunities and risks to academic integrity if not balanced by ethical controls. (Cotton dkk., 2023) add that this pattern has the potential to systematically reduce students' cognitive engagement.

Thus, the use of AI in PAI education takes two forms: AI as a learning aid (to understand and deepen understanding of the material) and AI as a production tool (to generate assignments directly). This distinction is important because it is directly related to the quality of the learning process and the development of academic character. From a PAI perspective, which emphasizes process, honesty, responsibility, and sincerity, rather than merely results the second approach has the potential to seriously undermine the internalization of these values.

Students' Perceptions of AI from an Islamic Values Perspective

Students hold diverse views on AI, particularly when it is linked to Islamic values. In general, AI is understood as a neutral tool; whether it is good or bad depends on how it is used. One student stated: "In my opinion, AI isn't wrong, because it's just a tool. What matters is how we use it." This view reflects the findings of (Acosta-Enriquez & Arbulú Ballesteros, 2024) that students tend to accept the use of AI as ethical as long as it does not violate academic rules.

However, when the discussion turned to the issues of integrity and responsibility, a clear ambiguity emerged. Some students acknowledged that using AI to complete assignments

without adequate understanding does not fully align with the principle of integrity, yet the practice persists for practical reasons. This gap between normative understanding and actual practice was also identified by (Blahopoulou & Ortiz-Bonnin, 2025): students are positive toward AI while simultaneously recognizing its risks to academic ethics.

More fundamentally, students' understanding of AI ethics remains at a general level and has not yet been internalized within an Islamic value framework. Values such as *ṣidq* (honesty) and *amanah* (responsibility) have not yet been fully established as the foundation for determining the limits of AI use. This indicates that Islamic Education (PAI) instruction still operates at a conceptual level, while students' digital lives are evolving much more rapidly. (Fošner, 2024) found a similar situation: students face difficulties linking technology use to deeper ethical considerations. The main challenge lies not in the acceptance of this technology, but in how Islamic values can be presented contextually in digital practices.

Implications for Students' Digital Ethics

The use of AI not only influences how students learn, but also has a direct impact on their digital ethics. Digital ethics, in this context, is understood not merely as the ability to use technology, but rather as how students incorporate the values of honesty, responsibility, and moral awareness into their daily digital activities.

This study identified two contrasting behavioral trends. On the one hand, AI promotes the development of digital literacy: students access information more quickly, are more open to various sources of knowledge, and are more adaptable to technology. On the other hand, the use of AI without ethical reflection gives rise to problematic patterns. One informant stated: "Sometimes I just use the AI's answer right away, because it's faster. I'll edit it a little later." This statement indicates a shift in focus from process to outcome; students are no longer fully engaged in critical thinking but instead rely on technology to produce academic output. (Lund dkk., 2025) found that such patterns have a significant impact on academic integrity, particularly in the absence of adequate ethical literacy. (Espinoza Vidaurre dkk., 2024) added that the use of AI is correlated with an increased risk of integrity violations, particularly technology-based plagiarism.

The implications for digital ethics extend beyond honesty. Some students have shown a diminished sense of ownership regarding the learning process; they rely on AI without considering whether the results reflect their own abilities. From an Islamic Education perspective, this situation is serious: ethics are not measured solely by the final outcome, but by the process, intention, and awareness in one's actions. (Abuadas & Albikawi, 2026) emphasize that low ethical awareness in the use of AI leads to deviant academic behavior, including a weakening of commitment to honesty and responsibility.

However, these negative implications are not absolute. Some students, in fact, demonstrate reflective awareness: they begin to question the ethical boundaries of AI use and strive to use it more responsibly. This indicates that digital ethics are dynamic and can be shaped through appropriate education. AI serves as a "testing ground" for values; when honesty and responsibility have not yet been internalized, the technology is used pragmatically; when those values are strong, AI actually enhances the quality of learning.

Ethical Challenges and Dilemmas in the Use of AI

Students are not uniformly in a "safe" or "problematic" position when using AI; rather, they find themselves in a space fraught with ethical dilemmas. They recognize the value of honesty and responsibility, but the convenience of AI often leads them to make more practical choices, even if those choices are not entirely in line with those values.

This dilemma is most evident when students face assignments with tight deadlines. One informant remarked: “Sometimes I know it’s not entirely correct, but if I don’t use AI, I won’t finish the assignment on time.” This is not merely a matter of right or wrong, but a tug-of-war between academic integrity and practical necessity. (Cotton dkk., 2023) demonstrate that ChatGPT has created a new form of academic integrity challenge as the line between assistance and cheating becomes increasingly blurred. (Dwivedi, Kshetri, Hughes, Slade, Zolkepli, dkk., 2023) add that the use of generative AI often exceeds the regulatory frameworks in place at educational institutions.

Students’ ethical dilemmas can be classified into three categories. First, the dilemma of usage boundaries: uncertainty regarding the extent to which AI may be used in academic assignments. Second, the dilemma of work authenticity: doubts about whether AI-assisted results still represent one’s own abilities. Third, the moral responsibility dilemma: the awareness that excessive use diminishes the learning process, yet is still pursued for the sake of efficiency. (Chan, 2023) terms this phenomenon “AI-giarism” a new form of academic misconduct resulting from the use of AI without adequate ethical controls.

The main issue is not the absence of values, but the fact that these values have not yet been internalized in the digital context. The values of *ṣidq* and *amanah* need to be interpreted more contextually so that they are relevant to students living with technologies such as AI. This is where the role of PAI becomes strategic: not merely teaching values normatively, but providing a space for reflection that enables students to respond to ethical dilemmas critically and practically in their real lives.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that AI has become an integral part of the learning practices of Islamic Education students at IAI Al-Khairat Pamekasan not merely an additional tool, but a technology that shapes new patterns in understanding course material, completing assignments, and engaging with knowledge. The use of AI operates on two levels: as a constructive learning tool, and as a production tool that shifts students’ thought processes.

Students generally view AI as neutral, so its ethical dimensions depend entirely on individual awareness. However, this awareness is not yet consistent in practice: students understand the importance of honesty and responsibility, but in certain situations, practical considerations often prevail. As a result, students’ digital ethics are dynamic and not yet stable. AI promotes digital literacy, but at the same time opens the door to a weakening of academic integrity. Students also face three real ethical dilemmas: the ambiguity of the boundaries of AI use, doubts about the authenticity of work, and the tension between moral responsibility and the pressure for efficiency.

The main finding of this study confirms that AI does not directly determine the quality of students’ digital ethics, but rather serves as a testing ground for the internalization of Islamic values in a digital context. The main challenge of the AI era lies not in the technology itself, but in the ability of Islamic Education (PAI) to contextualize ethical values within students’ digital practices.

Theoretically, this study expands the concept of ethics from the realm of conventional social interaction to human interaction with technology and underscores the need to integrate digital literacy with ethical literacy within the framework of Islamic education. Practically, Islamic Education (PAI) courses need to be designed to be more adaptive by explicitly incorporating digital ethics discourse. Instructors cannot simply prohibit or restrict the use of AI; they must guide students in understanding the ethical boundaries and moral responsibilities associated with its use. At the policy level, Islamic religious universities need to formulate

guidelines for AI use that are not only regulatory but also educational, fostering students' ethical awareness on an ongoing basis.

For Islamic Education instructors, digital ethics must be integrated into teaching in a contextual manner: not merely by teaching moral concepts, but by demonstrating how those values apply concretely in the use of technology. For students, reflective awareness in using AI must be cultivated; technology should be used responsibly, not merely for convenience. For institutions, clear AI usage policies must be accompanied by ongoing digital literacy and ethics programs. For future researchers, this study can be expanded through a mixed-methods or cross-institutional comparative approach to provide a broader picture of students' digital ethics in the AI era.

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