



An Epistemological Reformulation of Islamic Education in Response to the Post-truth Era

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Abstract

This article examines the challenges facing Islamic education in responding to the phenomena of post-truth, disinformation, and hoaxes, which increasingly threaten the epistemological and social order of Indonesian Muslim society. The objectives of this study are to identify the epistemological implications of the post-truth era for the Muslim community, analyze the structural challenges faced by Islamic educational institutions, revitalize Quranic values as the foundation of digital literacy, and formulate transformative strategies for Islamic education. This study employs a qualitative method using a conceptual-integrative content analysis approach to examine accredited academic literature, normative Islamic texts (the Quran and Hadith), and the works of contemporary Islamic educational thinkers. The findings indicate that: i) the post-truth era creates an epistemological crisis exacerbated by the phenomena of digital taqlid and algorithmic echo chambers; ii) Islamic education faces structural challenges in curriculum, educator competencies, the digital information ecosystem, and digital character; iii) the concepts of *tabayyun*, *tadabbur*, and *tafakkur* constitute the foundations of Islamic epistemology that are relevant and structurally aligned with contemporary digital literacy methods such as SIFT and lateral reading; iv) the methodology of hadith chain criticism (*jarh wa ta'dil*) represents a legacy of multi-layered verification that can be adapted for digital literacy. The implications of this research underscore the urgency of reformulating the Islamic Religious Education curriculum based on the integration of Islamic epistemology and digital literacy.

INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of information technology in the 21st century has created a dramatically changed information ecosystem, an era called post-truth. This term was popularized by Oxford Dictionaries as the "Word of the Year" in 2016, referring to a condition where objective facts are no longer the main determinant of public opinion, but rather emotions and personal beliefs are more dominant (Erul et al., 2020; Soim et al., 2025).

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This phenomenon has serious implications for the Indonesian Muslim community. Hoaxes and disinformation have become a real threat, undermining social order, dividing the community, and potentially shaking faith (Herianto & Wijanarko, 2024). Indonesia is among the countries most vulnerable to the spread of hoaxes, exacerbated by social media algorithms that create echo chambers and filter bubbles, trapping people in a cycle of unbalanced information (Akhmadi, 2019). In a religious context, this phenomenon has given rise to digital *taglid*: the tendency to blindly follow religious content without adequate verification (Fatimah et al., 2022).

Islamic education, as a key pillar in shaping Muslim character and intellect, faces significant responsibilities. From madrasas to Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*), to Islamic universities, all are required to not only convey religious teachings textually but also equip students with critical thinking skills and digital literacy (Hmelo-Silver et al., 2007). Islamic values such as *tabayyun* (reflection), *tafakkur* (contemplation), and *tadabbur* (reflection) hold significant epistemological potential to counter the tide of disinformation (Efendi & Sholeh, 2023). However, reality shows that many Islamic educational institutions have not been able to optimally integrate this approach into their curricula (Hoddin, 2023; Najib, 2018).

This study aims to analyze the post-truth phenomenon in the context of Indonesian Muslim society; identify the structural challenges of Islamic education in the era of disinformation; elaborate on Islamic epistemological values as the foundation of digital literacy; and formulate transformative strategies for Islamic educational institutions to protect students from the threat of disinformation. This research contributes to the development of contemporary Islamic Religious Education discourse that is responsive to the challenges of the digital era, with the perspective of integrating Islamic epistemology and digital literacy, which has not been widely studied systematically.

METHODS

This research uses a qualitative method with a conceptual-integrative content analysis approach (Baroud et al., 2025; E. Efendi et al., 2026; Engkizar et al., 2023; Engkizar, Jaafar, Hamzah, Syafril, Febriani, et al., 2026; Engkizar, Jaafar, Hamzah, Syafril, Oktavia, et al., 2026; Sugiyono, 2016). Primary data sources include: accredited academic literature from national (SINTA) and international (Scopus/Web of Science) journals published in 2017–2024; the Quran and Hadith as normative sources; and the works of relevant contemporary Islamic educational thinkers. The analysis process is carried out through four stages: first, identification and classification of key concepts related to post-truth, hoaxes, and Islamic education; second, comparative analysis across perspectives between contemporary Western digital literacy theory and classical Islamic epistemological traditions; third, integrative synthesis to find points of alignment between the two; and fourth, formulation of a strategic framework that can be operationalized by Islamic educational institutions.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Post-truth Era and the Epistemological Crisis of Muslim Society

The post-truth era represents a fundamental epistemological shift in which emotions and identity replace objective facts in shaping public opinion (Widianingsih et al., 2023). Purwanto et al., (2019) explains that truth has become relative and dependent on narratives that best appeal to the masses. For Indonesian Muslims, this creates a double vulnerability: the high authority of religious sources and the lack of critical verification of content labeled religious (Zuhdi, 2018).

Social media algorithms that optimize engagement systematically reinforce echo chambers and filter bubbles that foster polarization (Qorib & Umiarso, 2025).

In a religious context, this phenomenon manifests as digital taqlid, blind obedience to virtual religious authorities without scientific verification (Soim et al., 2025). The spread of religious hoaxes peaked during the 2019 Presidential Election, when religious narratives were used as instruments of political mobilization, threatening religious cohesion (Nasri & Tabibuddin, 2023).

Classification of Disinformation and Its Alignment with Islamic Communication Ethics

Wardle and Derakhshan (2017) developed an analytical framework that distinguishes three categories of information disruption: misinformation (the unintentional spread of errors), disinformation (structured deception with a specific purpose), and misinformation (facts spread to cause harm). This framework can be aligned with established Islamic communication principles: *sidq* (truthfulness), *amanah* (trustworthiness), and the prohibition of backbiting and slander.

If disinformation is essentially a violation of intellectual trust, then Islamic education plays a strategic role in developing internal moral filters that prevent both passive and active participation in the chain of dissemination of misleading content. The integration of the Wardle-Derakhshan framework with Islamic communication principles strengthens the argument that digital literacy is not merely cognitive-technical but must be fostered as part of the noble character of the information ecosystem (Fadhilah, 2022).

Tabayyun as the Foundation of Quranic Epistemology

The Quran, Surah Al-Hujurat, verse 6, became the epistemological foundation that preceded the digital era: "O you who believe, if a wicked person comes to you with news, then verify it thoroughly." (Mukhibat et al., 2024) explains that the command to verify contains a comprehensive meaning: not just checking the truth of information, but tracing its source, motivation, and context. If McIntyre (2018) emphasizes that truth is often constructed through affective narratives, the Quran has positioned verification as a moral imperative that demands a balance between akal (*aqal*), proof (*bayyinah*), and spiritual responsibility.

Efendi et al., (2023) emphasized that *tabayyun* is not merely an individual obligation but a collective responsibility of the Muslim community. This concept is reinforced by *tadabbur* (Quran, Muhammad: 24) as deep contemplation and *tafakkur* as critical reflection; both are effective Islamic cognitive methods that counteract the consumption of information without a reflective process (Abdulloh et al., 2025). Thus, Islam's response to post-truth is transformative: not merely reactive through fact-checking, but rather reorienting the truth to the principle of right, which goes beyond subjective interests.

Synergy of the SIFT Method and the Sanad Hadith Criticism Methodology

The most significant finding in this study is the structural alignment between contemporary digital literacy methods and classical Islamic scholarly traditions. Caulfield's (2017) SIFT method: Stop (pause before reacting), Investigate (investigate the source), Find better coverage (find better coverage), and Trace (trace the claim to its original source) is structurally aligned with the methodology of hadith criticism in Islam.

The science of *rijal al-hadith* and the science of *jarh wa ta'dil* requires multiple layers of verification of the *sanad* (chain of narrators) and *matan* (content of the hadith), which is essentially a system of lateral reading, horizontally tracing the epistemic traces of information sources (Muhaemin & Yunus, 2023). By adapting the principle of lateral reading into an Islamic approach, students can be trained to break the cycle of polarization maintained by algorithms. Islamic education can formulate a curriculum that combines these two legacies as digital *adab al-'ilm*, making digital literacy a practice of intellectual worship (Mubiarto, 2024).

Structural Challenges of Islamic Education

The study identified four main structural challenges. First, the curriculum challenge: Islamic Religious Education tends to be textual-normative with minimal integration of digital literacy competencies (Nasri & Tabibuddin, 2023; Nur & Lubis, 2015). Second, the educator competency challenge: many Islamic Religious Education teachers lack adequate digital literacy skills and an understanding of the social media ecosystem, making it difficult to provide effective guidance to students (Hoddin, 2023). Third, the digital ecosystem challenge: religious hoax content spreads freely, while verified quality content remains limited and difficult to access (Mukhibat et al., 2024). Fourth, the digital character education challenge: character education in Islamic Religious Education institutions has not yet addressed the dimension of intellectual honesty in interacting with digital information (Lase, 2019).

Transformative Strategy of Islamic Education

Based on the analysis and synthesis, five transformative strategies are formulated as follows: First, Organic Curriculum Integration: Integrating digital literacy into Islamic Religious Education organically by connecting Islamic values (*amanah, sidq, mas'uliyah*) with digital behavior. *Tabayyun* lessons are enriched with practical ways to verify digital information using available fact-checking tools (Sahin, 2018). Second, Developing Digital Competence for Educators: A systematic training program for Islamic Religious Education teachers includes digital literacy competencies, understanding the dynamics of social media, and the ability to be responsible digital curators. (Ridwan et al., 2025) emphasize a shift in mentality from a traditional approach to an adaptive and contextual approach.

Third, the Revitalization of Islamic Epistemology: placing *tadabbur, tafakkur*, and the critical method of *sanad* as core curriculum competencies. Making digital literacy a practice of intellectual worship connects 21st-century competencies with the epistemological heritage of the *ummah* within a framework of *adab al-'ilm* (Zuhdi, 2018). Fourth, transforming Islamic Boarding Schools as Moral Fortresses: Optimizing the socio-cultural capital of Islamic boarding schools to develop innovative programs that equip students with critical interaction skills in the digital ecosystem while strengthening their Islamic identity. (Hidayat, 2021) proves that Islamic boarding schools have great resilience and potential in the 4.0 era. Fifth, building a healthy Islamic information ecosystem: collaboration across Islamic educational institutions, the government, religious leaders, and civil society to create a platform for easily accessible, verified religious content as a real alternative to hoax content (Zuhri, 2021; Bustami et al., 2024).

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the post-truth era is not merely a technological challenge, but rather an epistemological crisis that requires a transformative response from Islamic education. First, the spread of religious hoaxes, the phenomenon of digital imitation, and social media-based Islamic populism are concrete manifestations that require a serious response from the world of Islamic education. Second, Islamic education faces structural challenges in the curriculum, educator competency, the digital information ecosystem, and digital character education. Third, Islam possesses extraordinary epistemological resources: *tabayyun* (religious reflection), *tadabbur* (religious reflection), *tafakkur* (contemplation), and hadith criticism methodologies that are structurally aligned with the best contemporary digital literacy methods. Fourth, the necessary transformative strategies include organic curriculum integration, development of educator digital competency, revitalization of Islamic epistemology, strengthening the role of Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*), and the development of a healthy Islamic information ecosystem.

The implications of this research point to the urgency of developing an Islamic

Religious Education learning model based on the integration of Islamic epistemology and digital literacy as a further research agenda, as well as the need for a curriculum policy from the Ministry of Religious Affairs that explicitly integrates digital literacy competencies into Islamic Religious Education learning standards at all levels of education. The alignment between classical Islamic scholarly traditions and contemporary digital literacy methods represents a significant opportunity that Indonesian Islamic education must optimize.

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