
The Role of Islamic Religious Teachers in Shaping Students' Digital Ethics in the Social Media Era

U Abdullah Mu'min¹, Budi Munawar Khutomi², M Renaldy Fadillah³

^{1,2,3} Islamic Religious College (STAI) Pelabuhan Ratu, West Java Indonesia

¹Email: abdullahmumin@staip.ac.id

²Email: budimunawar@staip.ac.id

³Email: renaldy@staip.ac.id

Abstract: This study examines the role of Islamic Religious Education teachers in shaping students' digital ethics in the social media era at SMAN 1 Palabuhanratu. Using a qualitative case study design, this research involved five participants, including two Islamic Religious Education teachers, one school principal, and two students selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and document analysis and analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings reveal that teachers play central roles as educators, moral guides, and facilitators in developing students' digital ethics. These roles are implemented through contextual learning strategies, such as group discussions, case-based learning, and reflective assignments that connect Islamic values with students' digital experiences. The study also identifies key challenges, including limited student awareness of digital ethics, exposure to negative online content, and inconsistent parental supervision. To address these challenges, teachers actively foster collaboration with parents and link ethical learning in school with students' social environments. This study highlights the active and contextual role of teachers in shaping students' digital ethics and underscores the importance of integrating moral and religious values into digital learning practices across educational settings.

Keywords: Role; Digital Ethics; Shaping; Social Media

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.15575/atthulab.v11i1.54558>
Received: mm, yyyy. Accepted: mm, yyyy. Published: mm,yyyy.

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INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of information and communication technology, particularly social media, has significantly transformed patterns of human interaction and communication (Adiyono et al., 2024; Joo & Teng, 2017). While social media facilitates the rapid exchange of information, it also introduces ethical challenges such as the spread of misinformation, hate speech, and inappropriate online behavior (Huda, 2024; Sudarmanto & Meliala, 2020). These issues are especially prevalent among adolescents, who actively engage in digital environments without sufficient ethical awareness.

Islamic Religious Education teachers have a crucial role in filling this void by teaching students to interact in cyberspace ethically and responsibly (Dehghan & Razanejad, 2022; Sugianto, 2024). Moreover, In addition, they can also help students understand the importance of their role in creating a digital community of mutual respect and care. Essentially, In this context, Islamic education teachers have a strategic position in shaping digital ethics, considering that Islamic teachings place great emphasis on manners, respect between individuals, and wisdom in utilizing technology.

Therefore, the role of Islamic religious teachers becomes very important, because the teachings of Islam provide ethical principles that can guide students to behave properly in cyberspace. (Khosla & El - Yunusi, 2024; Nurhabibi Nurhabibi, Arifannisa Arifannisa, Diauddin Ismail, Dedi Kuswandi, Aprillia Fentika Dewi Gita Anggraeni, 2025; Pranoto & Haryanto, 2024) Nevertheless, it is still rare to find research that deeply discusses how Islamic religious teachers in secondary schools, such as at SMAN 1 Palabuhanratu, contribute to the formation of digital Ethics in this era of social media. This digital ethics includes various things, such as maintaining good manners in communicating on social media (Amriani et al., 2023; Bowen, 2013; Shodiqoh, 2024), respecting the privacy rights of others, and avoiding the spread of false information or harming others.

Previous research has widely addressed digital ethics within the context of social media usage. Qowim et al. argue that character education plays a crucial role in shaping adolescents' ethical conduct in digital spaces, particularly in minimizing negative interactions on social media (Qowim et al., 2024) (In a similar vein, Sipahutar et al. demonstrate that Islamic Religious Education significantly contributes to the formation of students' digital moral awareness, aligning ethical values with contemporary technological developments (Sipahutar et al., 2023). Zarman further conceptualizes *adab* in managing digital information as an ethical framework within Islamic educational discourse on technology use (Zarman, 2023). Meanwhile, Zumhur views social media as a strategic tool for enhancing Islamic religious learning in the digital age (Alamin & Missouri, 2023). Complementing these perspectives, Rizky Giansyah Putra et al. explore the dual nature of social media by identifying both obstacles, including misinformation and unsuitable content, and its potential to expand access to Islamic education (Rizky Giansyah Putra et al., 2024). Different from previous studies, Suntono et al. focus on the practical role of Islamic religious teachers in guiding ethical WhatsApp usage among MTs students (Suntono, Bella Fatmawati, Mia Mahista, 2024).

Although there have been many studies that discuss digital ethics and the role of Islamic religious education in shaping character, there is still a lack of research that specifically examines the role of Islamic religious teachers in guiding students to

develop digital ethics in the era of social media. Most previous studies have focused on character education in general or the influence of family in shaping digital morality, without focusing on the role of Islamic religious teachers as facilitators who directly interact with students in the classroom and outside the classroom regarding the use of technology (Kurniawan & Annisah, 2025; Rochim & Khayati, 2022). Therefore, this study provides novelty by exploring in depth how Islamic religious teachers can utilize religious teachings in teaching digital ethical values to students, especially in the context of social media that continues to grow rapidly.

This study is different from previous studies because it focuses more on the active role of Islamic religious teachers in the formation of digital ethics. Most previous studies have placed more emphasis on character education in general or the role of the family in the development of digital ethics. This study also delves deeper into how Islamic religious teachers in schools face challenges in the digital age, as well as the efforts they make to apply religious teachings in the formation of positive behavior on social media.

This study is highly relevant in response to the rapid advancement of digital technology, which necessitates innovative approaches within Islamic Religious Education. One of the key challenges lies in equipping the younger generation with adequate knowledge and competencies related to digital ethics in order to address contemporary societal demands (Aida & Arif, 2022; Wasehudin et al., 2023). The lack of students' readiness to engage responsibly in virtual environments often leads to behaviors that deviate from moral principles and may result in adverse social consequences if not properly addressed. By emphasizing the role of Islamic religious teachers, this research seeks to contribute to the development of a generation that is not only proficient in utilizing digital technology but also demonstrates strong moral awareness in digital interactions.

SMAN 1 Palabuhanratu, as one of the high schools based in coastal areas with diverse student characteristics, has its own challenges in facing this digital era. Although many students are already familiar with social media, an understanding of how to use social media wisely and in accordance with religious values is still very necessary. In this regard, Islamic religious teachers play an important role in directing students to make positive and productive use of social media.

The objective of this research is to delve deeper into the role of Islamic teachers in SMAN 1 Palabuhanratu in the formation of student digital ethics, as well as the factors that influence these efforts. The study will also explore the various approaches used by Islamic religious teachers in teaching digital ethics, as well as the challenges they face in dealing with rapid changes in technological developments and social media.

The results of this study are expected to contribute to the development of Islamic religious education curriculum that is relevant to the needs of the Times and provide insight into the importance of character formation and digital ethics among the younger generation.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach using a case study design. The case study was selected because this research aims to explore in depth the role of Islamic Religious Education teachers in shaping students' digital ethics within a specific context, namely SMAN 1 Palabuhanratu. According to Creswell and Creswell, a case study enables researchers to investigate a contemporary phenomenon within its real-

life setting through multiple sources of data (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The qualitative approach is appropriate as it focuses on understanding participants' perspectives, experiences, and practices related to digital ethics in the context of social media use (Nasir, 2024; Nassaji, 2015). Through this design, the study seeks to provide a detailed and contextualized description of how teachers implement ethical values in digital learning environments, rather than merely producing generalized findings.

This study was conducted at SMAN 1 Palabuhanratu, a public high school characterized by high levels of student engagement in social media use. The participants were selected using a purposive sampling technique based on their relevance to the research objectives, involving a total of 5 participants consisting of 2 Islamic Religious Education teachers as the main informants, 1 school principal, and 2 students who were actively engaged in digital-based learning activities. Islamic Religious Education teachers were chosen due to their central role in guiding students' ethical behavior in both classroom and digital contexts, while the principal provided institutional perspectives, and students contributed insights into their experiences and responses toward the implementation of digital ethics education. The selection criteria included active involvement in digital-related teaching or learning processes, familiarity with Islamic ethical values, and willingness to participate in the study. Data collection was carried out until data saturation was achieved to ensure the depth and relevance of the findings.

Data were collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews and document analysis. The interviews were conducted directly with Islamic Religious Education teachers using an interview guide developed based on the research objectives, covering themes such as teaching strategies, challenges, and the integration of digital ethics in learning. Each interview lasted approximately 30–60 minutes, was audio-recorded with participants' consent, and subsequently transcribed verbatim for analysis. Follow-up questions were used to explore participants' responses in greater depth and to clarify emerging findings (Kallio et al., 2016; Karatsareas, 2022). In addition to interviews, documentation was collected by reviewing lesson plans, teaching materials, and school activity records related to digital ethics education. These documents were systematically examined to identify how ethical values were integrated into instructional practices. The data were then analyzed using thematic analysis, which involved data reduction, coding, categorization, and interpretation to identify key patterns and themes related to the role of teachers in shaping students' digital ethics. This process ensured that the findings were grounded in empirical evidence derived from multiple data sources.

RESEARCH RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The rapid advancement of information technology and social media has influenced social life, particularly among younger generations. The ease of accessing information and engaging in online interactions exposes students to various digital phenomena that may shape their behavior and ethical awareness in cyberspace, both positively and negatively. Inappropriate use of social media often results in issues such as the dissemination of misinformation, cyberbullying, and limited understanding of ethical norms in online communication.

Consequently, the cultivation of digital ethics among young people has become increasingly essential to ensure responsible and wise engagement with social media. In this context, Islamic education teachers play a strategic role not only as transmitters of religious knowledge but also as moral exemplars in shaping students' character,

including their conduct in digital environments. At SMAN 1 Palabuhanratu, Islamic religious teachers are particularly instrumental in guiding students to utilize social media ethically and responsibly while internalizing Islamic moral values in their digital interactions.

The role of Islamic Religious Teachers in the formation of Digital Ethics

In this fast-paced digital age, social media has become an indispensable part of everyday life, especially for the younger generation. (Chalim et al., 2024; Gabriela, 2017; Puspitasari, 2016) However, uncontrolled use of social media can have negative impacts, such as the spread of misinformation, hate speech, and other unethical behavior. (Burstein, 2013; Subramanian, 2017; Syahputra, 2020) In this context, the role of Islamic religious teachers is very important to guide students in understanding and implementing digital ethics that are in line with Islamic teachings. In addition to teaching worship and morals, Islamic religious teachers also provide guidance on manners in interacting in cyberspace. This digital ethics formation aims to help students use social media wisely, responsibly, and respect themselves and others.

As educators who have a moral responsibility in shaping the character of Students, Islamic religious teachers are expected to be role models and leaders in directing students to remain true to religious values, even though they are in an increasingly complex digital world. Interviews with Islamic teachers at SMAN 1 Palabuhanratu show that they play a crucial role in guiding students on digital ethics. Islamic religious teachers not only teach religious teachings related to worship and morals, but also instill moral principles that are relevant to interaction in cyberspace. For example, teachers emphasize the importance of manners in digital communication by integrating ethical discussions into classroom activities. During lessons, teachers present real cases of social media misuse, such as the spread of misinformation or inappropriate comments, and invite students to analyze these cases from an Islamic ethical perspective. Students are encouraged to reflect on the consequences of their online behavior and to express their opinions in a respectful manner during guided discussions. In addition, teachers provide direct feedback on students' communication styles, both in classroom interactions and in digital assignments, to reinforce appropriate ethical conduct. One teacher stated, "We teach students to be responsible for what they post, whether on social media or other platforms, by always keeping religious values in mind," which is implemented through continuous reminders, discussion-based learning, and evaluation of students' responses to digital ethical issues.

Some of the main roles of Islamic teachers in the formation of digital ethics at SMAN 1 Palabuhanratu, among others:

1. Provide an understanding of ethics in Islam. Moreover, Islamic religious teachers have taught students the moral and ethical values contained in Islamic teachings, such as maintaining honor, avoiding slander, doing justice, and respecting the rights of others. These principles are particularly relevant in the digital world, where interactions often occur without face-to-face interaction and can lead to misunderstandings.
2. Encourage the wise use of technology. Islamic religious teachers have given advice on how to use technology and social media wisely, such as not overdoing accessing social media, avoiding negative behaviors such as bullying or hoaxes, and inviting students to use technology for useful and positive things in accordance with Islamic principles.

3. Educate about digital privacy and security. Essentially, Islamic religious teachers have also taught the importance of maintaining privacy and personal data in the digital world. In Islam, maintaining one's honor and privacy is highly valued, and this can be applied in the context of cyberspace by not carelessly sharing personal information or damaging the reputation of others.
4. Fostering social responsibility in the digital world. Islam teaches the importance of being responsible for what is done, including in the digital world. Islamic religious teachers have reminded students not to spread information that harms others, do not create or spread misleading content, and always behave politely in interacting in cyberspace.
5. Set an example in the use of technology. Islamic religious teachers also try to be a good example in the use of technology and social media. By demonstrating positive behaviors in the digital world, such as sharing useful content and avoiding negative behaviors, teachers can inspire students to follow in their footsteps.
6. Introducing the concept of amar Ma'ruf nahi munkar in a digital context. In Islam, the concept of amar Ma'ruf nahi munkar (inviting to goodness and preventing evil) is very important. Islamic religious teachers have guided students to utilize digital media as a positive da'wah tool, which not only invites others to do good, but also prevents the spread of evil in cyberspace.
7. Guide in managing time. One of the challenges in the digital world is time management. Islamic religious teachers emphasize the need for students to maintain a balanced engagement between digital activities and other essential aspects of life, including religious practices and academic responsibilities. Islam teaches about the importance of time, and teachers can guide students to use their time productively, not get caught up in pointless activities in cyberspace. With these roles, Islamic religious teachers can contribute in forming a young generation that is not only digitally skilled, but also has good ethics in interacting in cyberspace.

This finding is in line with the theory of character education, which emphasizes the importance of internalizing moral values in education. These findings are consistent with character education theory, particularly Lickona's framework, which emphasizes that good character is developed through the integration of moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action (Lickona, 2013a). In this study, these dimensions are reflected in how Islamic Religious Education teachers guide students to understand ethical principles, internalize moral values, and apply them in digital interactions. Furthermore, from an Islamic educational perspective, the concept of *adab* plays a central role in shaping ethical behavior, emphasizing respect, responsibility, and proper conduct in both physical and digital environments (Shodiqoh, 2024; Zarman, 2023). This indicates that the formation of digital ethics is not only cognitive but also deeply rooted in moral and religious values.

Essentially, Islamic teachers at SMAN 1 Palabuhanratu have succeeded in conveying digital ethical values that are in accordance with Islamic teachings, which encourage students to be wiser and more responsible in interacting in cyberspace.

Learning strategies used by Islamic teachers

In an effort to establish sound digital ethics, Islamic Religious Education teachers at SMAN 1 Palabuhanratu employ a variety of learning strategies that are

aligned with students' needs in the social media era. These needs include the ability to critically evaluate online information, avoid the spread of misinformation, communicate respectfully in digital interactions, and manage their online behavior responsibly. In addition, students require guidance in understanding digital privacy, preventing cyberbullying, and using social media as a positive and productive platform in accordance with ethical and religious values. These strategies not only focus on the theory of religious teachings, but also involve practical approaches that can help students understand and apply the principles of digital Ethics in their daily lives. Some of the methods used include group discussions, case studies, and project-based tasks that encourage students to address issues related to ethical use of social media. Islamic religious teachers play a role in guiding students to recognize and resolve problems that arise in digital interactions, in order to comply with the ethical principles taught in the religion. Through this learning strategy, students are expected to internalize Islamic religious values that are relevant to their interactions in cyberspace and act responsibly and ethically.

Table 1. Learning Strategies Used by Islamic Religious Education Teachers in Digital Ethics Education

No	Learning Strategy	Implementation Description
1	Group discussion	Students discuss ethical and unethical social media behavior based on Islamic values
2	Case study method	Analyzing cases such as hoaxes and hate speech from an Islamic ethical perspective
3	Practical assignments	Writing essays or projects analyzing digital behavior contrary to Islamic ethics

Islamic teachers at SMAN 1 Palabuhanratu use various strategies in learning digital ethics. Some of the strategies found in this study include:

The implementation of learning strategies in shaping students' digital ethics at SMAN 1 Palabuhanratu is carried out through interactive and contextual activities both inside and outside the classroom. In group discussions, teachers organize structured sessions where students are invited to share their personal experiences in using social media, such as encountering misinformation or engaging in online debates. The teacher then facilitates the discussion by linking these experiences to Islamic ethical principles, guiding students to reflect on appropriate behavior and encouraging respectful communication during the exchange of opinions. This activity helps students develop awareness of ethical boundaries in digital interactions.

In the case study method, teachers present real or simulated cases related to digital ethical issues, such as the spread of hoaxes or instances of hate speech. Students are asked to analyze these cases in small groups by identifying the ethical violations and proposing solutions based on Islamic values such as honesty, responsibility, and respect for others. The results of the discussion are then presented and evaluated collectively, allowing students to develop critical thinking skills and apply moral reasoning in digital contexts.

Practical assignments are implemented through individual or group projects that require students to observe and analyze digital behavior in their daily lives. For example, students are assigned to review social media content and identify actions that

contradict Islamic ethical teachings, followed by reflective writing on how such behavior should be improved. In some cases, students are also encouraged to create positive digital content, such as educational posts or short messages promoting ethical online behavior. These activities not only reinforce students' understanding of digital ethics but also foster a sense of responsibility and active participation in creating a more ethical digital environment.

These strategies reflect a constructivist approach to learning, in which students actively participate in building their knowledge and understanding. Essentially, This is in accordance with the theory of Constructivism proposed by Piaget (Piaget, 1976), which states that effective learning occurs when students are directly involved in the learning process through interaction and experience (Pardjono, 2016; Sunanik, 2014; Widodo, A., & Nurhayati, 2005)

Challenges Faced by Islamic Teachers

Table 2 Challenges Faced by Islamic Religious Education Teachers in Forming Students' Digital Ethics

No	Identified Challenges	Impact on Digital Ethics Formation
1	Limited student awareness of digital ethics	Students underestimate the consequences of unethical online behavior
2	Exposure to negative digital content	Difficulty controlling the influence of hoaxes, cyberbullying, and inappropriate content
3	Lack of parental supervision	Inconsistent reinforcement of ethical values outside the school environment

Although Islamic teachers at SMAN 1 Palabuhanratu have worked hard to establish a good digital ethic among students, there are a number of challenges that must be faced in the process. One of the main challenges is the low awareness of students regarding the impact of their behavior on social media, such as spreading unverified information or engaging in unethical debates. In addition, outside influences such as negative content from social media, which often attracts students more, can affect their attitudes and behavior.

This shows that the formation of digital ethics does not only depend on teaching in schools, but also requires the active role of parents and society in supervising and setting a good example in the use of social media. This challenge requires Islamic religious teachers to continue to innovate in learning strategies and strengthen collaboration with related parties to create a better understanding of digital ethics among students.

Some of the challenges found in this study are:

1. Students' lack of understanding of digital Ethics: some students still lack understanding of the consequences of their behavior on social media. Some students consider that social media is a free space where they can freely talk without considering the impact.
2. Negative influence of social media: many students are exposed to negative content such as hoaxes, cyberbullying, and content that is incompatible with religious values. This causes difficulties for teachers in teaching digital ethics that are in accordance with Islamic teachings.

The purpose of this is to show how important the relationship between religious values taught by teachers and the increasingly strong guidance of the digital

environment. As stated by McLuhan (1964) in media theory, social media as a "message" has a major impact on individual behavior (Choiriyati, 2015; Strate, 2017). In this case, the negative influence of social media is an obstacle to the formation of digital ethics desired by Islamic religious teachers.

The role of parents and the environment in the formation of Digital Ethics

The involvement of parents and the broader social environment is essential in supporting the development of students' digital ethics, particularly in the context of the rapid expansion of social media. While Islamic religious teachers at SMAN 1 Palabuhanratu play a significant role in imparting digital ethical values, the formation of strong student character cannot rely solely on school-based education. As primary educators, parents bear substantial responsibility for monitoring their children's social media use and modeling appropriate behavior in digital spaces. Moreover, the social environment --including peers and the surrounding community-- exerts considerable influence on students' attitudes and conduct in online interactions. Therefore, effective collaboration among schools, parents, and the community is crucial to creating a consistent and supportive environment for instilling positive digital ethical values, enabling students to better understand and practice Islamic teachings in cyberspace.

The results of observations and interviews also show that Islamic religious teachers do not work alone in the formation of students digital Ethics. Moreover, The role of parents and the social environment of students is also very important. Essentially, Islamic education teachers often work closely with parents in providing guidance on digital ethics at home. Moreover, Some teachers stated that they provide guidance to parents on how they can assist children in using social media wisely.

These findings highlight the importance of collaboration between teachers, parents, and the wider community in fostering students' digital ethics, with Islamic Religious Education teachers playing a central coordinating role. In practice, teachers actively initiate communication with parents by providing guidance on supervising students' social media use, for example through informal meetings, class-based communication groups, or direct consultations regarding students' digital behavior. Teachers also encourage parents to reinforce ethical values at home, such as monitoring online activities and promoting responsible communication in digital spaces.

In addition, collaboration with the broader community is carried out by connecting school-based learning with students' social environments. Teachers guide students to apply digital ethical principles beyond the classroom, for instance by encouraging responsible participation in online communities and promoting the creation of positive digital content. In some cases, teachers also integrate real-life social issues into learning materials, allowing students to relate ethical teachings to their daily interactions within their community. Through these efforts, teachers not only act as educators but also as facilitators who bridge school, family, and community environments to ensure the consistent internalization of digital ethical values..

According to Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory of Human Development, Child Development is influenced by various social systems that interact with each other, including school and family (Bronfenbrenner, 1981; El Zaatari & Maalouf, 2022; Mujahidah, 2015). Therefore, this collaboration is the key to success in the formation of a good digital ethic for students.

CONCLUSION

Islamic teachers at SMAN 1 Palabuhanratu play a very important role in the formation of student Digital Ethics in the era of social media. Islamic religious teachers not only teach religious teachings in the context of worship and morals, but also integrate religious values that are relevant to interaction in cyberspace. Learning conducted through group discussions, case studies, and project-based tasks contributed to students' understanding of the importance of maintaining manners and ethics in social media interactions.

However, the study also found significant challenges in the formation of digital ethics, mainly related to students' lack of understanding of the consequences of their behavior on social media as well as negative influences coming from outside the school. Therefore, the role of parents and the social environment is very important in strengthening the values taught by Islamic religious teachers. Collaboration between schools, parents, and the community needs to be enhanced to create a consistent environment in supporting the formation of student digital Ethics.

This study contributes to Islamic Religious Education by clarifying the role of teachers as central agents in shaping students' digital ethics within social media contexts. Theoretically, it extends character education discourse by linking constructivist learning principles with Islamic moral concepts such as adab, demonstrating that digital ethics formation involves both cognitive understanding and moral internalization. Practically, the findings highlight how contextual strategies, including discussion, case analysis, and reflective tasks, can be used to address students' real digital challenges. The study also underscores the importance of collaborative engagement with parents and the broader social environment, with teachers acting as key facilitators in maintaining the consistency of ethical values. Its novelty lies in emphasizing the active and situated role of teachers, which remains underexplored compared to the dominant focus on general character education or family influence.

This study is limited by its single-site design and reliance on qualitative data, which may constrain the transferability and scope of its findings. Further research may broaden the context by involving multiple institutions, applying mixed-method approaches to examine outcomes more comprehensively, and investigating the role of digital platforms in mediating ethical learning. Such efforts are essential to advance a more systematic understanding of digital ethics education within Islamic educational settings.

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