



DIGITAL BASED PROJECT BASED LEARNING AS A NEW PARADIGM OF CONTEMPORARY ISLAMIC EDUCATION IN THE 21ST CENTURY

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Abstract:

The development of digital technology in the 21st century has required Islamic education to adapt to changing learning paradigms to remain relevant to the character of the modern generation. This study aims to analyze the implementation of digital-based Project-Based Learning (PjBL) in Islamic Education learning at Nurul Jadid Junior High School, Probolinggo, as a new paradigm for contemporary Islamic education. The method used was a qualitative case study, involving teachers, students, and guardians through interviews, observation, and documentation. Data analysis was carried out using the Miles and Huberman interactive model, and validation using triangulation and member checking. The results show that digital PjBL is able to build a collaborative, reflective, and authentic work-oriented learning culture. Digital products such as da'wah videos, educational podcasts, and infographics on Islamic values serve as a means of integrating knowledge and religious practice. This model also improves digital literacy, creativity, and student responsibility, while strengthening character and spiritual awareness. Thus, digital PjBL has proven to be a strategic approach in realizing 21st-century Islamic education that is globally competitive without losing its religious identity.

Keywords: *Project-Based Learning, Digital, Contemporary Islamic Paradigm*

INTRODUCTION

The development of digital technology in the 21st century has brought about major changes in various aspects of human life, including the Islamic education system. In this context, the world of education can no longer rely on conventional paradigms that emphasize the mere transfer of knowledge, but rather needs to move towards the process of developing civilized, creative, and adaptive individuals to the changing times. Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas emphasized that the primary goal of Islamic education is ta'dīb, namely the process of instilling adab (morality) that fosters awareness of humankind's place in the order of being. However, the realities of modernity and the flow of digitalization often shift the orientation of Islamic education from fostering adab (morality) to merely achieving instant results and technical efficiency. In the context of Islamic education in Indonesia, especially in institutions rooted in the Islamic boarding school tradition, the reconstruction of the contemporary Islamic education paradigm is an urgent need to remain relevant to the character of the digital generation and the demands of 21st-century competencies (Kamila Rahma Shalehah et al., 2025).

Fieldwork shows that many Islamic educational institutions face challenges in maintaining a balance between upholding traditional values and

adapting to digital innovation. Nurul Jadid Junior High School in Probolinggo, under the auspices of the Nurul Jadid Islamic Boarding School, is one such institution striving to bridge these two streams. On the one hand, this institution adheres to Islamic boarding school values, which emphasize moral development, discipline, and spirituality. However, on the other hand, technological developments and the implementation of the Independent Curriculum demand learning models that are more creative, collaborative, and relevant to the needs of the times (Ana et al., 2022). This situation creates a gap between the ideal goals of Islamic education and the reality of learning practices in the field. One solution considered potential to bridge this gap is the implementation of digital-based Project-Based Learning (PjBL), which integrates Islamic values with project-based learning methods and modern technology (Novanto et al., 2025).

Various previous studies have shown that Project-Based Learning is effective in improving 21st-century skills, such as critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and digital literacy. Research by Tsani and Sufirmansyah confirms that a knowledge society-based Islamic Religious Education learning model can foster independent learning and creativity through the use of digital technology (Tsani & Sufirmansyah, 2023). Meanwhile, research by Rizal Ilhamsyah and Mohammad Ramli emphasizes the relevance of contemporary Islamic education in maintaining moral and spiritual values amidst modernization (Ramli et al., 2024). In theoretical thought, Azyumardi Azra emphasizes the importance of integrating science, human values, and spirituality to ensure Islamic education remains adaptive to changing times (M. Zuhriansah, 2025). This literature reveals a gap in research linking the implementation of digital Project-Based Learning with the values-based paradigm of Islamic education, particularly in the context of Islamic boarding schools (pesantren).

This research is significant because it seeks to address the needs of Islamic education in the digital era through an empirical study of the implementation of digital Project-Based Learning as a new learning paradigm. Through this approach, the learning process focuses not only on academic achievement but also emphasizes the process of developing individuals with character, morals, and skills to face the challenges of the digital age (Mutanga, 2024). This research is expected to contribute to the development of Islamic education theory and practice that is responsive to social and technological change. Therefore, the urgency of this research lies in establishing a balance between spiritual values and digital-based learning innovations in the context of modern Islamic education (Khosi'in et al., 2024).

This research focuses on analyzing the implementation of digital-based Project-Based Learning in Islamic Education at Nurul Jadid Junior High School in Probolinggo. This study describes and analyzes project-based learning strategies and digital technology implemented by teachers and students in the context of a modern Islamic boarding school (pesantren) as a new paradigm in contemporary Islamic education. This study also examines the impact of this implementation on the learning process, character building, and the reconstruction of the 21st-century Islamic education paradigm. Therefore, this research aims to describe the dynamics of changes in the learning system in the digital era and uncover the Islamic educational values that are maintained and actualized in every process.

This research is based on the assumption that the integration of Project-

Based Learning with digital technology can become a new paradigm for Islamic education oriented towards the formation of perfect human beings in the modern era. This approach fosters critical, collaborative, and creative thinking skills, while strengthening spiritual and moral values in the learning process (Masdarini & Raka Marsiti, 2024). This research contributes to the development of contemporary Islamic educational science by offering a learning model that combines Islamic scientific principles with technological innovation. Thus, this research implies the need to reconstruct the paradigm of Islamic education towards an approach that fosters a generation of digitally savvy, critical, ethical, and visionary Muslims amidst the global challenges of the 21st century (Safitri et al., 2025)..

RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study approach to deeply understand the implementation of digital-based Project-Based Learning (PjBL) in the context of Islamic education in Islamic boarding schools (pesantren). This approach was chosen because it allows for exploring the processes, meanings, and real-life experiences that occur during learning. The research was conducted at Nurul Jadid Junior High School in Probolinggo, a formal educational institution under the auspices of the Nurul Jadid Islamic Boarding School, which combines a modern education system with Islamic values. This location was chosen because it reflects a contemporary Islamic education model that seeks to integrate Islamic scholarly traditions with digital technological innovations in modern learning processes.

The unit of analysis for this study is the implementation of digital-based Project-Based Learning in Islamic Education for eighth-grade students. The researchers focused on how teachers design, implement, and evaluate project-based learning supported by digital media, as well as how students construct Islamic knowledge and values through collaborative, technology-based learning experiences. Data sources were obtained from three main informant groups: Islamic Education teachers as learning implementers, eighth-grade students as learning participants, and foster parents as substitute guardians of students in Islamic boarding schools. Informants were selected purposively based on their direct involvement in the learning process and the relevance of the required data.

Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation. Data analysis employed the Miles and Huberman interactive model, which includes data reduction, data presentation, and drawing and verifying conclusions. Inter-method triangulation was applied to maintain the validity of the findings, while data validity was ensured through four qualitative criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Furthermore, member checking, audit trails, and peer debriefing techniques were used to ensure that the research results were accurate, reliable, and reflected the reality of implementing digital-based PjBL in building a new paradigm for contemporary Islamic education in the 21st century.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Reconstructing the Paradigm of Contemporary Islamic Education in the Digital Era

The research findings indicate that the paradigm of Islamic education in the digital era has undergone significant reconstruction, particularly in the

methodological aspects, value orientations, and the dynamics of relationships between teachers, students, and guardians at Nurul Jadid Junior High School in Probolinggo. This change is evident in the shift in the teacher's role from the sole source of knowledge to a facilitator in digital technology-based collaborative learning. Islamic education, previously dominated by lectures and memorization, has evolved into an interactive process through the integration of digital media such as learning videos, interactive e-books, and online presentation platforms. This shift is not only technical but also philosophical, as it demands a renewal of the Islamic education paradigm to remain relevant to the needs of the 21st-century generation without abandoning the principle of ta'dib as the foundation of adab and morality (Assalihee et al., 2024).

The integration of technology into learning at Nurul Jadid Junior High School demonstrates a creative adaptation to the global digitalization. Teachers no longer act as the sole controllers of the learning process, but rather as mediators, facilitating students' independent construction of knowledge. Field observations indicate that the learning process takes place in a collaborative and open atmosphere. Students discuss in small groups, seek additional digital resources, and present their findings through visual and audio media. This process encourages more meaningful and contextual learning, where Islamic values are not merely understood theoretically but also internalized through creative and communicative learning practices (Wahid, 2024).

Interviews with teachers, students, and guardians reinforce the finding that the implementation of digital technology is a renewal strategy with theological and educational value. Teachers stated that digital technology helps clarify abstract concepts in Islamic teachings, particularly in the areas of morality and worship, because it can be visualized in engaging simulations. Students also assessed that digital-based learning makes them more active, confident, and facilitates their practical understanding of Islamic values (Wisudaningsih et al., 2025). The school added that this innovation is not simply a modern trend, but rather a form of educational ijtihad aimed at maintaining the relevance of Islamic values amidst rapid social and cultural change (Muslim, 2024).

Documentation of learning activities also demonstrates a shift in learning culture among students. Teacher reflection notes show that students are now more confident in asking questions, expressing opinions, and connecting religious concepts to everyday life through digital media. In some projects, students even create simple da'wah content, such as educational videos on cleanliness in Islam or digital posters themed on honesty and discipline. These activities demonstrate that technology no longer stands outside of Islamic values, but rather serves as a means of good deeds that realize the principle of da'wah bil hal (preaching by means of deeds). In other words, digitalization, in this context, serves as a means to expand the reach of Islamic values through creative spaces that align with the characteristics of the digital generation (Mala & Masfufah, 2024).

This phenomenon demonstrates the continuity between Lev Vygotsky's social constructivism theory and Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas's concept of ta'dib. Vygotsky emphasized the importance of social interaction as the foundation for knowledge formation, while al-Attas positions education as a process of instilling adab (good manners) involving a harmonious relationship between the mind, soul, and revealed values. The integration of the two is reflected in the learning practices at Nurul Jadid Junior High School, where

students construct knowledge collaboratively and are also guided to understand moral responsibility in every learning activity. Thus, the reconstruction of the Islamic education paradigm in the digital era is not merely a technical change, but rather an effort to build spiritual and intellectual awareness that prepares a knowledgeable, civilized, and globally competitive generation (Ahmad, 2021).

The results of this study indicate that the use of digital technology has strengthened the spiritual dimension of the educational process. Through the integration of knowledge and practice, students become not only recipients of information but also disseminators of Islamic values through digital works. Teachers view this activity as a form of digital da'wah with lasting value, as students' work has the potential to provide sustainable benefits to others. Thus, the implemented digital innovations not only enhance 21st-century skills such as critical thinking, communication, and collaboration but also deepen spirituality and a strong religious awareness among students (Zaini Hartika et al., 2025).

Implementation of Digital Project-Based Learning in Islamic Education Learning

The implementation of digital Project-Based Learning (PjBL) at Nurul Jadid Junior High School in Probolinggo has demonstrated a positive impact in increasing student participation, motivation, and responsibility in the learning process. Observations indicate that the Islamic Education learning process has transformed toward a more collaborative model, where digital projects are used to integrate Islamic values into students' learning experiences. Teachers utilize various tools such as thematic e-books, video tutorials, and online presentation applications to facilitate a more active and creative learning process. Learning activities are designed to enable students to explore Islamic concepts through concrete experiences, rather than simply memorizing them. Thus, digital PjBL is an effective means of integrating knowledge, practice, and creativity in a modern Islamic educational environment (Sd & Rejang, n.d.).

Interviews with teachers and students indicate that digital PjBL creates a more meaningful learning experience because it emphasizes students' direct involvement in designing, implementing, and assessing their projects. The teacher explained that each project begins with the selection of an Islamic theme relevant to everyday life, for example, "Cleanliness is Part of Faith" or "Good Manners to Others." During the project, students are divided into diverse groups and given responsibilities based on their abilities. Some handle the script, edit the visuals, prepare the narrative, and even act as the messenger in the video. This process fosters a sense of responsibility, cooperation, and leadership among students. Meanwhile, the work uploaded to digital platforms serves as tangible evidence of a creative and Islamic learning process (Kalifaur, Khairtati, 2024).

The implementation of digital PjBL at Nurul Jadid Middle School includes six main phases: problem orientation, project planning, information collection, data processing, digital product development, and reflection on the results. During the orientation phase, the teacher introduces the Islamic topic to be studied and relates it to the students' real lives. The project planning phase involves group discussions to determine the format and media to be used, such as video, podcast, or digital infographic. This process continues with information gathering through the study of verses and hadith, field observations, and online resource exploration. Students then process the data

and create a digital product before finally reflecting on their work in an evaluation session with their teachers and guardians. Through these activities, students learn to connect knowledge with Islamic values, fostering a spiritual awareness that grows naturally from their learning experiences (Syarif et al., 2023).

Documentation results indicate that this digital PjBL approach significantly changed classroom dynamics. The learning atmosphere became more lively and collaborative, with students actively engaging in discussions, seeking references from digital sources, and presenting creative ideas. On several occasions, teachers provided prompt and constructive feedback to help refine the projects. These project activities helped students develop more analytical thinking while fostering social attitudes and spiritual awareness through collaboration and hands-on classroom experience. Teachers assessed that through project activities, students more easily understood Islamic values because the process provided a space for them to express their morals and faith through meaningful work (Ardiansyah, 2025).

Interviews with guardians in Islamic boarding schools revealed that digital project-based learning helps strengthen the relationship between the school, students, and the dormitory environment. Guardians reported that students involved in digital projects become more disciplined, communicative, and responsive to religious duties outside the classroom. They view these projects as a form of da'wah training that educates students to convey Islamic messages using technological language appropriate to the modern generation. This demonstrates digital project-based learning as an innovative learning strategy and an instrument for fostering students' character and morality amidst the challenges of the global era (Jannah & El-Yunusi, 2024).

The implementation of digital project-based learning aligns with George Siemens' connectivism theory, which emphasizes that knowledge in the digital age is built through information networks and social collaboration. Through digital projects, students engage in a networked learning process, where they share ideas, assess outcomes, and reflect on the meaning of Islam from various perspectives. In the context of Islamic education, this model is a concrete manifestation of the value of good deeds, as each project contains dimensions.

Implications of Digital Project-Based Learning for the Development of 21st Century Islamic Education

The implementation of digital Project-Based Learning (PjBL) at Nurul Jadid Junior High School in Probolinggo has strategic implications for the development of a 21st-century Islamic education paradigm. Based on documentation and interviews, this approach has fostered a collaborative, reflective, and authentic learning culture. Digital projects such as educational videos, Islamic missionary podcasts, and posters embodying Islamic values serve as a platform for self-actualization for students, integrating knowledge and practice. This learning creates a lively and participatory learning space, enabling students to integrate Islamic knowledge with real-life practices through creative activities relevant to modern life. Thus, digital PjBL is a crucial instrument in preparing a generation of Muslims with character, adaptability, and global competitiveness, while remaining grounded in divine values (Fatahilah et al., 2022).

Learning documentation indicates that digital PjBL contributes to strengthening students' character, responsibility, and digital literacy. Students

demonstrated the ability to use technology wisely as part of the learning process, supporting the development of knowledge and a sense of responsibility. Teachers noted that students became more disciplined, focused, and demonstrated a high sense of responsibility for the projects they worked on. Some students even developed new interests in design, video editing, and Islamic propagation communication through social media. These changes demonstrate that the use of technology in Islamic education expands students' learning methods and fosters practical skills aligned with Islamic values (Syarif et al., 2023).

Guardians and teachers also considered digital project-based learning to be an effective means of expanding Islamic propagation in Islamic boarding school-based educational environments. Student projects were often displayed at school activities or shared through the Islamic boarding school's internal digital media. These activities fostered spiritual pride and a sense of belonging to Islamic teachings. From a da'wah perspective, this model reflects a transformation from conventional da'wah to a more contextual and communicative digital da'wah. Islamic education thus plays a dual role: guiding reason while also revitalizing the spirit of da'wah through modern, broader-reaching media (Sari, 2024).

The implementation of digital PjBL aligns with the ideas of contemporary Islamic education developed by figures such as Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas and Ziauddin Sardar. Al-Attas emphasizes Islamic education as a process of cultivating adab (good character) involving the integration of knowledge and morals, while Sardar highlights the importance of future-oriented Islamic education that is adaptive to technological and civilizational developments. The implementation of digital PjBL at Nurul Jadid Middle School is a concrete example of the application of these two perspectives: education rooted in the values of revelation and remaining open to technological innovation as a means of strengthening the role of Islam in the modern world.

The results of this study indicate that the digital PjBL model encourages the formation of a transformative learning community within the school environment. Collaboration between teachers, students, and guardians creates an interactive and participatory learning environment, encouraging the involvement of all parties in the educational process. Teachers act as facilitators and spiritual guides, students as creators and transmitters of values, and guardians as liaisons between the Islamic boarding school environment and the family. This collaboration demonstrates that contemporary Islamic education is evolving toward a more open approach and providing space for the active participation of all school components. This pattern aligns with the direction of Islamic educational reform, which positions students as active subjects in the formation of knowledge and character (Syarif et al., 2023).

The findings of this study also have philosophical implications for the direction of Islamic educational development in the digital era. Digital project-based learning (PjBL) demonstrates that technology can be a means of tazkiyah al-nafs (purification of the soul) when used within the framework of Islamic values. Every digital project-based learning activity is positioned as a good deed, where students express their faith through their work. These results demonstrate that Islamic education plays a strategic role in developing intellectual abilities while strengthening students' moral and spiritual values. Thus, digitalization is no longer viewed as a threat to Islamic values, but rather as an opportunity to expand da'wah (Islamic outreach), strengthen adab

(ethics), and instill moral awareness in the digital space (Handayani, 2024). Overall, it can be concluded that the implementation of digital-based project-based learning (PjBL) at Nurul Jadid Middle School is a strategic step in realizing 21st-century Islamic education that is adaptive to current developments while instilling Islamic values.

CONCLUSION

This research demonstrates that the implementation of digital Project-Based Learning (PjBL) at Nurul Jadid Junior High School in Probolinggo has a positive impact on improving the quality of learning while simultaneously fostering a collaborative, reflective, and work-oriented learning culture. This model positions students as active subjects capable of integrating knowledge and practice within an Islamic context. Each digital product produced, whether in the form of a da'wah video, a podcast, or a poster of Islamic values, becomes a concrete expression of faith and a means of strengthening character and responsibility. Digital PjBL has been proven to foster discipline, digital literacy, and spiritual awareness in students, thus enabling Islamic education to emerge as a space for developing perfect human beings who adapt to current developments without losing their moral and religious identity.

Scientifically, this research has important implications for the direction of development of the contemporary Islamic education paradigm. The integration of digital technology and Islamic educational principles demonstrates that digitalization can function as a means of purifying the soul and serving as a modern da'wah medium that fosters manners and moral awareness. These findings demonstrate that Islamic education today is evolving toward a more meaningful and participatory learning process. Teachers serve as spiritual guides and role models, while students are the primary actors in creating values and works, while guardians serve as bridges between Islamic boarding school life and family life.

The limitations of this study lie in its limited scope, limited to a single institution, Nurul Jadid Junior High School, and its focus on Islamic Education subjects at the junior high school level. Therefore, further research is recommended to expand the scope of study to various educational levels and social contexts, including exploring the long-term impact of digital PjBL on character development, spirituality, and student readiness to face the global challenges of the 21st century.

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