



## Instructional Model for Multicultural Islamic Education in Digital High Schools : Systematic Literature Review

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### ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the urgency, identify the challenges, and reformulate (reframe) multicultural Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in the context of secondary school learning in facing the phenomenon of digital polarization. The approach used is a systematic literature review (SLR) with conceptual-thematic analysis based on the PRISMA framework of 21 selected articles that specifically focus on the context of secondary education, gathered from the Scopus database within the period 2016–2026. This study is also reinforced by fundamental literature related to Islamic education, multiculturalism, digital literacy, and algorithmic culture. The results reveal three main findings. First, digital polarization not only causes fragmentation of religious discourse but also drives a shift in authority to the digital space and strengthens tendencies toward exclusivism, thus requiring a reorientation of PAI towards dialogical, reflective, and inclusive learning. Second, the development of multicultural PAI faces multidimensional challenges that include epistemological aspects (the dominance of textual-doctrinal approaches), pedagogical aspects (limited critical digital literacy and teachers' dialogical capacities), as well as structural aspects (the influence of algorithmic culture that creates echo chambers and cognitive biases). Third, a comprehensive strategy is needed, encompassing the reconstruction of the PAI paradigm, the development of an integrative curriculum based on multiculturalism and critical digital literacy, the design of dialogical-participatory learning, the strengthening of teacher competencies, and cross-stakeholder collaboration. This study produces an integrative and adaptive instructional design model for multicultural PAI, covering components of learning challenges, instructional interventions, stages of the learning process, as well as learning outcomes and assessments. This model provides practical contributions as an operational framework for the development of PAI curriculum and learning design that is responsive to the dynamics of digital polarization.

**Keywords:** Islamic Religious Education, Multiculturalism Digital Polarization; Critical Digital Literacy; Secondary School.

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### INTRODUCTION

The development of digital technology over the past decade has triggered fundamental changes in patterns of social interaction, knowledge production, and the construction of religious identity in the public sphere. In the network society perspective, information flow is no longer centralized but is instead distributed through various digital platforms that accelerate and intensify information circulation (Castells, 2011). The emergence of new opportunities for the democratization of religious discourse is a result of transformation, shifting religious authority from traditional institutions to digital spaces that are fluid, fragmented, and often

unverified (H. Campbell, 2013; Evolvi, 2022; Hefner, 2022). Nevertheless, beyond these opportunities, digital transformation has also spawned phenomena such as social polarization, discourse fragmentation, religious exclusivism, as well as the formation of simplistic and textual religious identities in digital spaces (Zuhri & Pabbajah, 2026; Suyanto et al., 2022). This situation demands responsive capabilities towards socio-ideological dynamics in a critical, reflective, and transformative manner not merely technological adaptation. In the context of formal education, particularly at the secondary school level, these dynamics become crucial because students are at a stage of cognitive and social development that renders them vulnerable to the formation of religious identities in digital spaces.

Digital polarization shapes collective identities through antagonistic narratives, simplification of religious teachings, and the reproduction of exclusive religious discourse. This phenomenon not only reflects differences in perspective but also narrows the space for dialogue and deepens the segregation of thought. In the context of contemporary Muslim societies, contestation between conservative and moderate religious narratives is intensifying and influences students' perspectives in understanding religion (Jubba et al., 2022). Furthermore, digital exposure without being balanced with critical literacy contributes to the emergence of pseudo-radicalism among students (Suyanto et al., 2022). Therefore, strengthening critical digital literacy, inclusivity, and religious moderation has become an urgent need in education, especially at the secondary school level.

In the context of Islamic Religious Education (PAI), the challenge of digital polarization necessitates a more fundamental paradigm shift. Thus far, PAI has tended to operate within a textual-normative framework that emphasizes the doctrinal transmission of religious knowledge, thereby lacking in encouraging reflective, dialogical, and contextual awareness (Memon et al., 2021; Zuhri & Pabbajah, 2026). Yet, in a complex digital landscape, PAI is tasked not only with building cognitive understanding but also with fostering the ability to navigate differences, manage discourse conflict, and critically examine the mass circulation of religious information (Evolvi, 2022; Sahin, 2018). Consequently, integrating multicultural perspectives and critical digital literacy into PAI becomes an epistemological necessity (Banks, 2008; Potter, 2019; Mu'ti, 2023). In practice, PAI must transform into a learning space capable of cultivating inclusive and reflective religious attitudes.

On the other hand, advances in digital technology also offer opportunities for reconstructing PAI learning to be more dialogical, participatory, and contextual. Various studies indicate that pedagogical approaches based on active participation, dialogue, and religious literacy can enhance students' cross-perspective understanding and tolerant attitudes (O'Grady & Jackson, 2020; Awang-Hashim et al., 2019; Walker et al., 2021). In addition, the integration of technologies such as e-learning and mobile learning has proven to enhance engagement and digital literacy in religious education (Y. Hanafi et al., 2019; A. H. Hanafi, 2022). Nevertheless, the use of technology without appropriate pedagogical design actually risks reinforcing polarization. Therefore, it is necessary to design learning processes that holistically integrate digital literacy, multicultural values, and awareness of algorithmic culture. Curricular issues and educator competencies also present crucial challenges. The integration of multicultural values in the PAI curriculum tends to be implicit and has not been systematically structured (Banks, 2004). Moreover, teachers' readiness to manage religious discourse in digital spaces still varies, especially in terms of digital literacy and dialogical pedagogy (Dalimunthe et al., 2023; Howard et al., 2021). On the other hand, technological developments such as artificial intelligence also present opportunities for innovation as well as ethical challenges in PAI learning (Achruh et al., 2024). This indicates that strengthening PAI requires interventions focused not only on the curriculum but also on the ongoing enhancement of educators' pedagogical capacities.

Policies such as religious moderation and digital literacy are initial steps in building an inclusive educational ecosystem. However, most PAI studies have yet to explicitly link the internalization of tolerance values with the dynamics of digital communication and the algorithmic structure of social media (Evolvi, 2022; Khoeriyah et al., 2022). In fact, studies show that the digital environment has significantly shaped religious authority, student identity, and

the quality of learning (Hefner, 2022; Eraku et al., 2021; Mintasih et al., 2024; Suhilmiati et al., 2024). Furthermore, existing research remains fragmented between a focus on pedagogical strategies and digital literacy, without comprehensive conceptual integration (Unstad & Fjørtoft, 2021; Seiple & Hoover, 2021; Noe et al., 2026). Thus, there is a conceptual gap in the literature, particularly regarding integrating multicultural education, critical digital literacy, and algorithmic culture within an operational framework for PAI.

Based on this background, this study aims to analyze and reconstruct Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in responding to the dynamics of digital polarization through an integrative approach combining multicultural education, critical digital literacy, and awareness of algorithmic culture. This study not only seeks to synthesize the literature but also to develop an operational conceptual framework for PAI instructional design at the secondary school level. More specifically, the study is formulated in several research questions as follows:

RQ1: How urgent is multicultural Islamic Religious Education in responding to the phenomenon of digital polarization among secondary school students?

RQ2: What are the epistemological, pedagogical, and structural challenges in the implementation of Islamic Religious Education in the digital era, based on the literature synthesis?

RQ3: What are the strategies for implementing integrative, responsive, and applicable PAI learning to internalize multicultural values, critical digital literacy, and awareness of algorithmic culture?

This study offers a novel contribution through the integration of three main perspectives: multicultural education, critical digital literacy, and algorithmic culture into the instructional design framework. Unlike previous studies that tended to be descriptive and fragmented, this study seeks to reconstruct the PAI conceptual framework in an integrative and operational manner. Consequently, the research results are expected to not only contribute to theoretical development but also serve as practical guidelines for curriculum development, instructional design, and strengthening educator competencies in facing the dynamics of a plural and polarized digital society.

## **METHOD**

This study This study employs a qualitative approach with the type of research being library research, positioned within the framework of a systematic literature review (SLR) based on conceptual synthesis. This approach was chosen to allow for the systematic formulation of a conceptual model for Multicultural Islamic Religious Education (PAI) through critical integration of relevant literature, particularly in the context of secondary school learning. Unlike descriptive library studies, this research emphasizes the process of integrating concepts, identifying patterns, and developing an applicable theoretical framework in response to the phenomenon of digital polarization.

The research design refers to the systematic literature review framework combined with conceptual-thematic analysis as described by (Snyder, 2019). This approach enables the formation of a coherent and systematic conceptual construction, not only through the description of findings but also through the processes of integration, comparison, and reinterpretation of the analyzed literature.

### ***Search Strategy***

The data sources in this study consist of scientific literature, including reputable international journal articles, especially those indexed in major academic databases, namely Scopus. The choice of this database is based on its multidisciplinary coverage, the quality of its indexed publications, as well as its relevance to the study of Islamic education in a global context.

The literature search process was conducted using a combination of Boolean operators and search strings designed to capture studies related to Islamic Religious Education, multicultural education, critical digital literacy, and digital polarization in the context of secondary education. The publication timeframe was limited to 2016–2026 to ensure study

relevance and novelty, while still considering fundamental classical literature (Creswell, 2014; Zed, 2008).

The search stages included initial identification, screening based on titles and abstracts, as well as eligibility assessment through full-text review to ensure alignment with the research focus.

Table 1. Search String

Database	Search String	Result
Scopus	(TITLE-ABS-KEY ("Islamic education" OR "PAI" OR "religious education") AND TITLE-ABS-KEY ("multicultural education" OR "religious diversity") AND TITLE-ABS-KEY ("digital literacy" OR "digital polarization" OR "social media") AND TITLE-ABS-KEY ("secondary school" OR "high school"))	n = 313

Table 2. Eligible Criteria

No	Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
	Studies discussing Islamic Education, multicultural education, or digital literacy	Studies not relevant to educational or religious contexts
	Studies related to digital polarization or digital media phenomena	Studies that do not address digital contexts or digital literacy
	Focus on secondary education level (secondary/high school)	Focus on primary education, higher education, or non-formal education without conceptual relevance
	Peer-reviewed journal articles and reputable academic publications	Popular sources, opinion pieces, or non-academic works
	Publication range from 2016–2026	Studies published outside the specified time range
	Employ clear methodology and strong academic argumentation	Studies lacking methodological clarity
	Published in English	

The inclusion and exclusion criteria in this study are designed to ensure that the selected literature possesses a high level of relevance and credibility to the research focus. For inclusion criteria, this study prioritizes works discussing Islamic Religious Education (PAI), multicultural education, as well as critical digital literacy, particularly those related to the phenomenon of digital polarization in the educational context. The main focus is directed at the secondary/high school level, considering that at this stage, students are in a crucial phase of forming their religious and social identities in digital spaces. In addition, only articles that have undergone the peer-review process and demonstrate clear methodologies and strong academic argumentation are included, to ensure that the findings analyzed are evidence-based and scientifically accountable. The publication range is limited to the years 2016 to 2026 to ensure data novelty, while still considering relevant classical literature as a theoretical foundation (Creswell, 2014; Snyder, 2019; Zed, 2008).

On the other hand, exclusion criteria are applied to filter out literature that is not aligned with the research focus. Studies unrelated to the educational context or that do not discuss religious dimensions are eliminated. Additionally, research that does not examine digital aspects, digital literacy, or information polarization is also excluded from the analysis. Literature focused on other educational levels, such as primary education, higher education, or non-formal education without strong conceptual relevance, is also excluded, given the differences in learning characteristics at each educational level. Sources that have not undergone peer review, are of a popular nature, or lack methodological clarity are also eliminated to maintain the quality of the data used.

The application of these criteria aims to ensure that the research focuses on up-to-date, high-quality literature that is directly relevant to the dynamics of Islamic Religious Education in the context of digital polarization. After screening and eligibility stages, the selected literature is then analyzed using a qualitative approach to identify patterns, themes, and key trends in the studies reviewed, especially those related to epistemological, pedagogical, and structural challenges in multicultural PAI teaching.

The literature selection process was carried out systematically through several stages. Initially, articles were identified via searches in the main database, namely Scopus. Next, screening was conducted based on titles and abstracts to assess initial relevance to the research questions. The subsequent stage was an advanced evaluation through full-text review to ensure the substantive relevance and suitability to the research context.

The data analysis technique used in this study is thematic analysis developed by (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The analysis process consists of several stages: (1) data familiarization through in-depth reading of the literature, (2) open coding to identify units of meaning, (3) axial coding to group codes into main themes, (4) selective coding to build relationships between themes, and (5) conceptual synthesis to integrate all findings into a conceptual model of multicultural PAI relevant to learning dynamics at the senior secondary school level in the era of digital polarization. This approach enables the identification of patterns, relationships, and in-depth meaning constructions related to the dynamics of multicultural education in the context of digital polarization, as recommended in literature-based qualitative research (Snyder, 2019).

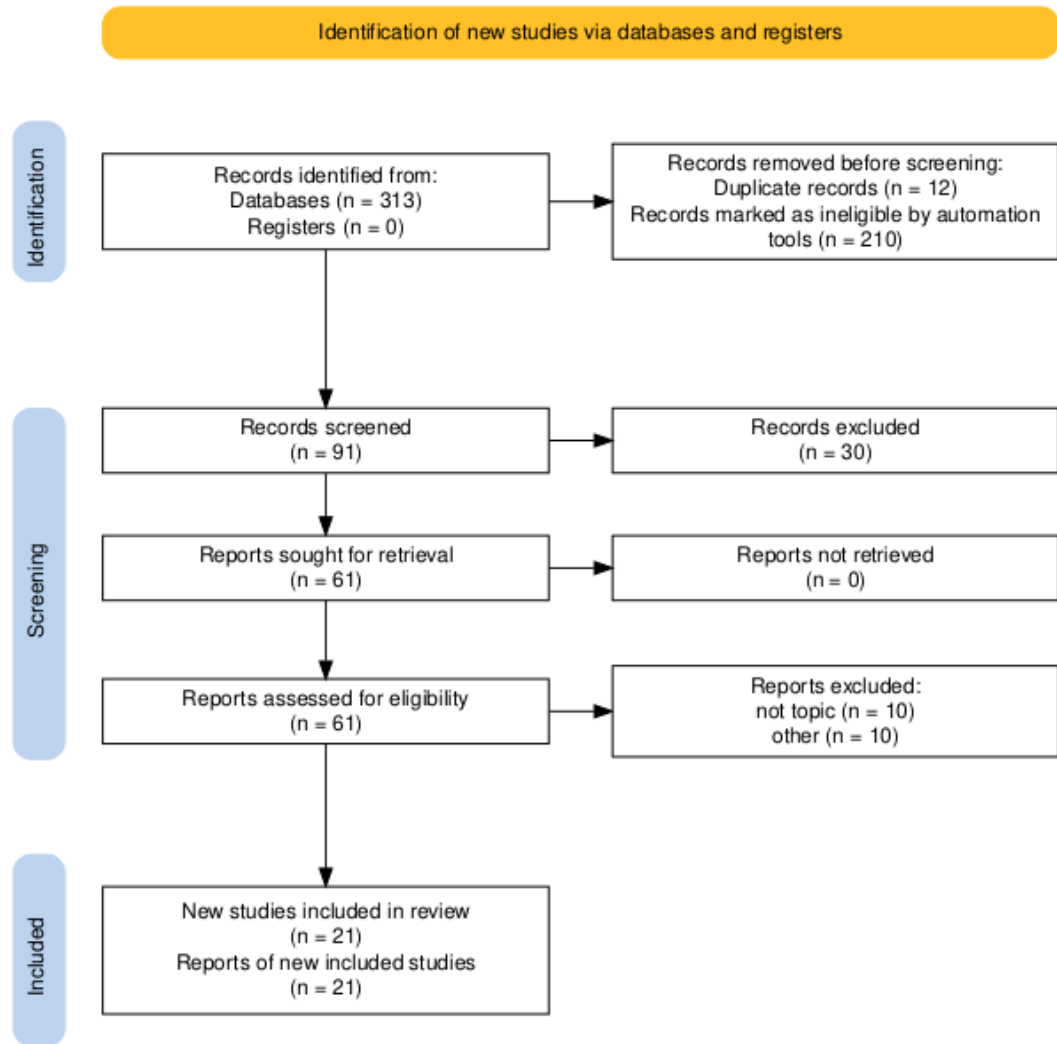
To maintain reliability and validity, the literature selection and analysis process was carried out systematically by documenting each stage in the form of an audit trail. In addition, literature evaluation was performed repeatedly to minimize potential bias in source selection. This approach aligns with the principles of systematic literature review, emphasizing transparency and consistency in the analysis process (Snyder, 2019).

Although a comprehensive search was conducted, the number of articles meeting the inclusion criteria is relatively limited. This is due to the specific research focus requiring a direct connection between Islamic Religious Education, multicultural education, critical digital literacy, and the phenomenon of digital polarization. Therefore, only literature that truly meets the criteria is used in the synthesis stage.

Overall, the systematic approach employed in the literature selection process enables the researcher to identify the most relevant and high-quality sources. Thus, the research findings obtained possess a strong degree of credibility and are able to make significant contributions to the development of the conceptual framework for multicultural Islamic Religious Education in the digital era.

The literature selection process in this study follows the flow of the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA). The PRISMA diagram is used to depict the stages of identification, screening, eligibility, and final determination of the articles analyzed. All of these selection stages are systematically visualized in the following PRISMA flow diagram:

Figure 1. PRISMA Flow Diagram (Haddaway, Page, Pritchard, & McGuinness, 2022)



## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The literature search process in the academic database section yielded a total of 313 records identified from the Scopus database. A total of 222 records were eliminated, consisting of 12 duplicate data and 210 records that were automatically identified as not meeting the eligibility criteria. Subsequently, 91 records proceeded to the screening stage based on title and abstract, with 30 excluded for being irrelevant to the research focus. Next, 61 articles were sought in full-text form. All 61 articles available in full-text versions then underwent a more in-depth eligibility assessment. At this stage, 10 articles were eliminated for lacking substantial relevance to the research topic, while another 10 articles were excluded due to methodological and conceptual considerations. In the end, 21 study articles were deemed to meet all inclusion criteria and were used in the final synthesis process.

The literature selection stages organized through the PRISMA flow succeeded in reducing the hundreds of initial articles to 21 study articles that the researcher considered most relevant to the focus of this research, namely the transformation of multicultural Islamic religious education in the context of digital polarization, as illustrated in the diagram. To assist readers in understanding the direction of the study, methodological approach, and each study's contribution, summaries of the twenty-one analyzed studies are presented in the following table:

Table 3. Articles Included in the Systematic Review

No	Theme	Author(s)	Method	Findings
1	Epistemological Challenges	(Zuhri & Pabbajah, 2026)	Qualitative	Understanding of aqidah in digital spaces tends to be textual and simplistic, reducing contextualization and dialogical engagement.
2	Epistemological Challenges	(Sahin, 2018)	Qualitative	Islamic education faces tension between traditional values and modern secular frameworks, requiring critical reinterpretation.
3	Epistemological Challenges	(Mu'ti, 2023)	Qualitative	Pluralistic Islamic education promotes inclusivity and tolerance, offering a framework for multicultural PAI.
4	Pedagogical Challenges	(Aderibigbe et al., 2023)	Qualitative	Islamic education can foster tolerance and respect for diversity through value-based pedagogy.
5	Pedagogical Challenges	(Dalimunthe et al., 2023)	Qualitative	ICT integration in Islamic education creates opportunities but requires digital competence and adaptation.
6	Pedagogical Challenges	(Achruh et al., 2024)	Qualitative	AI adoption in Islamic education offers innovation but presents ethical and pedagogical challenges.
7	Structural Challenges	(Hefner, 2022)	Qualitative	Digital environments reshape students' religious authority and identity, especially among Muslim youth.
8	Structural Challenges	(Jubba et al., 2022)	Qualitative	Contestation between conservative and moderate Islam influences educational narratives and student perspectives.
9	Structural Challenges	(Suyanto et al., 2022)	Qualitative	Digital exposure contributes to pseudo-radicalism among educated youth, highlighting the need for critical literacy.
10	Instructional Strategy	(Awang-Hashim et al., 2019)	Qualitative	Inclusive learning strategies based on active participation and instructional differentiation enhance engagement in multicultural classrooms.
11	Instructional Strategy	(O'Grady & Jackson, 2020)	Qualitative	Dialogic teaching helps students engage with religious differences constructively in classroom settings.
12	Instructional Strategy	(Unstad & Fjørtoft, 2021)	Qualitative	Disciplinary literacy enhances students' ability to critically interpret religious texts.
13	Instructional Strategy	(Walker et al., 2021)	Qualitative	Religious literacy supports civic engagement and intercultural understanding in education.
14	Instructional Strategy	(Seiple & Hoover, 2021)	Qualitative	Cross-cultural religious literacy fosters global understanding and tolerance among students.

15	Instructional Strategy	(Von Brömssen et al., 2020)	Qualitative	Religious literacy policies shape inclusive curricula in multicultural educational systems.
16	Instructional Strategy	(Y. Hanafi et al., 2020)	R&D	Mobile learning enhances religious learning engagement and digital literacy among students.
17	Instructional Strategy	(Y. Hanafi et al., 2019)	Quantitative	E-learning improves students' Qur'anic literacy and engagement in religious learning.
18	Instructional Strategy	(Noe et al., 2026)	Mixed Methods	Integrated multicultural-inclusive Islamic pedagogy effectively internalizes values of tolerance, peace, and inclusivity in Islamic school contexts.
19	Pedagogical Strategy	(A. H. Hanafi, 2022)	Qualitative	Religious literacy processes support students' understanding of moderation and inclusivity.
20	Assessment Strategy	(Nortvedt et al., 2020)	Qualitative	Culturally responsive assessment emphasizes fair, contextual, and culturally sensitive evaluation.
21	Assessment Strategy	(Lawson et al., 2024)	Qualitative	Multicultural learning evaluation includes pedagogical dimensions, classroom interaction, and cultural sensitivity in measuring effectiveness.

*Source : Scopus*

The summary presented in the table reflects the diversity of research contexts, methodological approaches, and thematic focuses in the literature on multicultural Islamic Religious Education (PAI) amid digital polarization, particularly at the high school level. Generally, the analyzed studies indicate that the development of the field is not only concentrated on conceptual aspects but has also moved towards strengthening pedagogical and strategic dimensions in teaching. This is evident from the dominance of the instructional strategy theme, which accounts for nearly half of the total articles, followed by themes of epistemological, pedagogical, and structural challenges, as well as the development of learning evaluation strategies.

Methodologically, the literature analyzed shows a tendency towards the dominance of qualitative approaches, with method variations such as conceptual analysis, case studies, and interpretive studies. In addition, there are also research and development (R&D), quantitative, and mixed methods approaches that enrich analytical perspectives. This diversity reflects the complexity of the relationship between religious education, digital transformation, and the need to strengthen multicultural values in a digitized society.

Substantively, the findings in the table reveal a relatively consistent pattern across three main dimensions: epistemological, structural, and pedagogical. In the epistemological dimension, the study by (Zuhri & Pabbajah, 2026) shows that understanding of creed in digital spaces tends to be textual and simplistic, thereby reducing the depth of contextualization and dialogue. This finding is reinforced by (Sahin, 2018), who highlights tensions between traditional Islamic values and the modern-secular framework, as well as (Mu'ti, 2023), who offers a pluralistic Islamic educational approach as a solution for building inclusivity. These show that epistemological challenges concern not only content but also the ways in which religious knowledge is produced and understood in the digital era.

In the structural dimension, changes in the digital landscape also shape students' religious authority and identities. The study by (Hefner, 2022) affirms that the digital environment has given rise to new forms of religious authority that influence how students

understand religion. Meanwhile, (Jubba et al., 2022) demonstrate contestation between conservative and moderate Islam, impacting educational narratives and student perspectives. Furthermore, digital exposure not balanced with critical literacy, as revealed by (Suyanto et al., 2022), can potentially trigger pseudo-radicalism among students. These findings indicate that digital polarization is not only technological but also structural, since it is associated with the distribution of authority, the production of discourse, and socio-religious dynamics.

In the pedagogical dimension, the main challenge lies in the need to adapt teaching to the development of digital technology. The study by (Dalimunthe et al., 2023) shows that integrating information technology into Islamic education opens up opportunities for innovation, but requires adequate digital competence from educators. This is supported by (Achruh et al., 2024), who highlight ethical and pedagogical challenges in the use of artificial intelligence, as well as (Aderibigbe et al., 2023), who stress the importance of a values-based approach in fostering tolerance. Thus, pedagogical challenges involve not only teaching methods but also teachers' readiness to manage digital learning dynamics reflectively and contextually.

On the other hand, the literature also points to significant progress in formulating more operational and applicable learning strategies. Various studies on the instructional strategy theme underline the importance of inclusive, participatory, and dialogic learning approaches. For instance, (Awang-Hashim et al., 2019) emphasize participatory-based inclusive learning strategies, while (O'Grady & Jackson, 2020) demonstrate the effectiveness of dialogic learning in fostering understanding across religious differences. In addition, the strengthening of religious literacy as a foundation for learning also emerges as a key finding, as shown by (Unstad & Fjørtoft, 2021), (Walker et al., 2021), and (Seiple & Hoover, 2021), who all stress the importance of interpretive skills and cross-cultural understanding in religious education.

Furthermore, the integration of technology in learning is also a significant focus. The studies by (Y. Hanafi et al., 2019) show that e-learning and mobile learning can enhance both student engagement and religious literacy. Meanwhile, (Noe et al., 2026) offers an integrated multicultural Islamic pedagogy that has proven effective in internalizing the values of tolerance, peace, and inclusivity. In terms of evaluation, (Nortvedt et al., 2020) and (Lawson et al., 2024) emphasize the importance of culturally responsive assessment approaches as a component of inclusive learning systems.

Nevertheless, most studies still show limitations in comprehensively integrating critical digital literacy, multicultural values, and learning design into a unified framework. Some research remains partial, with separate focuses on pedagogical strategies, digital literacy, and learning assessment. This situation indicates that, at the high school level, integration among these three aspects has yet to be systematically built into a comprehensive pedagogical model.

Such diversity and limitations in findings indicate that the development of multicultural Islamic Religious Education in the digital era requires an integrative approach that simultaneously cuts across epistemological, pedagogical, and structural dimensions. Therefore, the following discussion is directed at synthesizing the main emerging patterns, identifying conceptual gaps in the literature, and formulating a more systematic and applicable learning framework. This analysis holds not only theoretical relevance but also provides practical implications for constructively responding to the challenges of digital polarization in high school settings.

## **DISCUSSION**

### ***The Urgency of Multicultural Islamic Education in the Context of Digital Polarization***

Based on the synthesis of findings in the SLR table, the fundamental changes in communication patterns and the production of religious knowledge amid digital polarization not only demand adaptive capabilities but also expose the limitations of the prevailing conceptual framework of Islamic Religious Education (PAI), which has tended to be normative and textual. The transformation in how young people access, understand, and discuss religious teachings through digital media has driven a shift in religious authority from formal institutions to digital spaces that are more open yet do not always have clear epistemic

legitimacy. This aligns with the findings of (Hefner, 2022), who shows that the digital environment has reshaped students' religious authority and identity.

In this context, PAI needs to be reoriented as a space for dialogic, critical, and reflective learning. Approaches that focus solely on the transmission of normative knowledge are no longer sufficient, especially at the high school level where students actively engage with diverse digital religious sources. Therefore, the urgency of developing multicultural PAI lies not just in the pedagogical dimension, but also in the epistemological dimension that is, in how religious knowledge is produced, validated, and understood within the fragmented digital landscape. The findings of (Zuhri & Pabbajah, 2026), which reveal a tendency for simplistic religious understanding in the digital realm, as well as (Sahin, 2018), who highlights the tension between traditional values and modernity, further emphasize the need for a more reflective and contextual approach to teaching PAI.

Furthermore, the literature synthesis identifies three main forms of urgency that indicate the need to reframe multicultural Islamic Education (PAI) in the era of digital polarization. First, the increasing diversity of interpretations of religious teachings as a consequence of the open digital space. Individuals now have broad opportunities to produce and distribute religious discourse without sufficient epistemic authority. This reinforces the findings of (Jubba et al., 2022) regarding the contestation between conservative and moderate religious narratives that influence students' perspectives. In this situation, learners' dialogical and evaluative capacities become key competencies that must be developed through instruction.

Second, digital exposure that is not accompanied by critical literacy has the potential to reinforce cognitive biases and produce a narrow understanding of religion. The study by (Suyanto et al., 2022) shows that digital exposure can encourage the emergence of pseudo-radicalism among students. This indicates that integrating critical digital literacy into PAI instruction is no longer optional, but a fundamental necessity to help students sort, evaluate, and reflect on religious information critically.

Third, there is increasing complexity in pedagogical challenges in PAI instruction in the digital era. The study by (Dalimunthe et al., 2023) confirms that integrating technology in Islamic education requires adequate digital competence, while (Achruh et al., 2024) shows that the use of technology such as artificial intelligence introduces new ethical and pedagogical challenges. On the other hand, the value-based approach as expressed by (Aderibigbe et al., 2023) remains an important foundation for building attitudes of tolerance, but it needs to be integrated with a critical approach so as not to stop at normative value internalization alone.

Within this framework, multicultural education needs to be repositioned not only as a normative, value-based approach, but also as an operational epistemological and pedagogical framework in instructional design. Multicultural education must be able to promote not only appreciation of diversity, but also students' cognitive and reflective abilities in facing various religious narratives circulating in the digital space (Banks, 2008). This aligns with findings in the instructional strategy theme that emphasize the importance of inclusive, dialogic, and participatory learning approaches.

Several studies in the table show a more concrete development direction for strategies. For example, (Awang-Hashim et al., 2019) emphasizes learning based on active participation, while (O'Grady & Jackson, 2020) demonstrates the effectiveness of dialogic approaches in building understanding across differences. In addition, strengthening religious literacy as put forward by (Unstad & Fjørtoft, 2021), (Walker et al., 2021), and (Seiple & Hoover, 2021) is an important strategy in helping students critically and contextually interpret religious texts. Technology integration through e-learning and mobile learning has also proven to increase student engagement (Y. Hanafi et al., 2020), while integrated multicultural Islamic pedagogy approaches can internalize values of tolerance and inclusivity more effectively (Noe et al., 2026). Nonetheless, the literature synthesis shows that the integration of critical digital literacy, multicultural values, and instructional design has yet to be systematically built into a comprehensive framework. Most studies remain partial and have not comprehensively linked the learning process, digital dynamics, and learning evaluation mechanisms, as highlighted by

the importance of culturally responsive assessment approaches (Lawson et al., 2024; Nortvedt et al., 2020).

Thus, the urgency of developing multicultural PAI in the era of digital polarization lies not only in the need for pedagogical adaptation but also in reconstructing epistemological frameworks and integrative instructional designs. At the secondary school level, this need becomes even more crucial because students are in a phase of identity formation that is heavily influenced by the flow of digital information. Therefore, an instructional design framework is required that is able to systematically integrate epistemological, pedagogical, and digital literacy dimensions, so that PAI instruction functions not only as value transmission but also as a process for shaping critical, reflective, and inclusive thinking capacities in facing the complexities of digital polarization.

**Challenges in Multicultural Islamic Education in the Context of Digital Polarization**

Based on the synthesis of findings in Table SLR, the challenges faced by multicultural Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in the context of digital polarization are not only technical in nature, but also encompass fundamental issues in epistemological, pedagogical, and structural dimensions. These three dimensions are interconnected and create systemic constraints in responding to the dynamics of the digital ecosystem, especially at the secondary school level as the main space for students' interaction with digital religious information. Thus, the gap between current instructional practice and the demands of learning in the digital era is not merely an issue of implementation, but also reflects the unpreparedness of conceptual and pedagogical frameworks in responding to the changing landscape of religious knowledge. Therefore, strengthening integrative instructional frameworks that can link religious, technological, and digital social context dimensions is an urgent need (H. A. Campbell & Tsuria, 2021; Evolvi, 2018).

Table 4. Dimensions of the Challenges in Multicultural Islamic Education Transformation in the Era of Digital Polarization

Dimension	Aspect	Manifestation in Learning	Impact on Students
Epistemological	Learning approach	Dominance of textual-doctrinal approaches; limited dialogue and contextualization	Passive learners; difficulty in relating religion to digital realities
Pedagogical	Teacher competence	Limited digital literacy; lack of ability to manage digital discourse	Non-constructive discussions; potential conflicts
Structural	Algorithmic culture	Echo chambers; information polarization	Reinforcement of exclusivism; low levels of tolerance

*Source: Research synthesis from (Zuhri & Pabbajah, 2026; Aderibigbe et al., 2023; Dalimunthe et al., 2023; Achruh et al., 2024; Hefner, 2022; Jubba et al., 2022; Suyanto et al., 2022)*

On the epistemological dimension, the dominance of the textual-normative approach has become the main challenge in PAI learning. Findings in the SLR table indicate that religious understanding in the digital space tends to be simplistic and lacking in contextualization (Zuhri & Pabbajah, 2026), and faces tension between traditional values and the demands of modernity (Sahin, 2018). This situation indicates that PAI learning has not yet been fully able to accommodate the complexity of religious knowledge production and distribution in the digital era. As a result, learners tend to become passive recipients and lack the ability for critical reflection on the various circulating religious narratives. In fact, as emphasized in the perspective of multicultural education, dialogical and reflective abilities are essential prerequisites for building inclusive religious understanding (Banks, 2008; Nieto, 2017). Therefore, a shift is needed from doctrinal approaches to those that open space for negotiation of meanings, cross-perspective dialogue, and contextualization of religious teachings in digital realities.

On the pedagogical dimension, the main challenges lie in teacher readiness and instructional design. The findings in the table show that technological integration in Islamic education indeed opens opportunities for innovation but, at the same time, demands adequate digital competence (Dalimunthe et al., 2023) as well as pedagogical readiness in managing technology-based and even AI-based learning (Achruh et al., 2024). Moreover, value-based learning approaches have proven effective in fostering tolerance (Aderibigbe et al., 2023), yet their implementation is still not systematically structured in teaching practice. This reveals a gap between 21st-century competency demands and teaching practices that remain conventional. In the context of secondary schools, teachers are not only required to master religious material but must also be able to facilitate complex digital discourse, constructively manage differences, and guide students in building rational and ethical argumentation. Without a clear instructional design, the discussion space potentially turns into conflict. Therefore, developing an instructional model that integrates a dialogical approach, critical digital literacy, and inclusive pedagogy has become an unavoidable necessity.

Meanwhile, on the structural dimension, the challenges become more complex with the advent of algorithmic culture in the digital ecosystem. Findings in the SLR table show that the digital environment is reshaping religious authority and students' identities (Hefner, 2022), and gives rise to contestation among various religious ideologies (Jubba et al., 2022). In addition, digital exposure also contributes to the emergence of pseudo-radicalism among the educated younger generation (Suyanto et al., 2022). This phenomenon is closely related to algorithmic mechanisms that create echo chambers, thus reinforcing cognitive bias and limiting access to alternative perspectives. In the context of PAI learning in secondary schools, this condition affects the pattern of religious knowledge consumption, making it homogeneous and lacking in criticality. As a result, the internalization of multicultural values such as tolerance and openness becomes impeded. Therefore, PAI learning needs to be directed not only toward mastery of content, but also toward developing students' critical capacities in understanding how technology especially algorithms shapes the construction of religious knowledge. Overall, these three dimensions of challenge indicate that the problems of multicultural PAI in the era of digital polarization are multidimensional and interrelated. Therefore, partial approaches are no longer sufficient. An integrative and systematic instructional framework is needed that can link the epistemological, pedagogical, and structural dimensions simultaneously. In the context of secondary schools, this framework becomes very important because students are at a crucial phase in the formation of religious identity amid the complex and polarized currents of digital information.

#### ***Synthesis of Instructional Strategies for Model Development***

Based on the synthesis of strategies identified in the SLR Table, the transformation of multicultural Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in the context of digital polarization demands an approach that is not partial, but rather integrative and based on a conceptual synthesis of various strategies that have been developed in the literature. These strategies generally point toward more reflective, dialogical, and contextual learning. However, findings in the literature indicate that these diverse approaches are still scattered in a fragmentary manner and have not yet been integrated into a systematic and operational instructional design framework, particularly in the context of secondary school learning.

Conceptually, the strategies found in the literature can be grouped into three main patterns. First, strategies that emphasize a shift from knowledge transmission toward developing learners' critical capacity in responding to diversity and the complexity of digital religious information. In this context, learning no longer focuses solely on content mastery, but on students' ability to interpret, evaluate, and reconstruct religious meaning contextually. Approaches such as dialogical learning (O'Grady & Jackson, 2020), disciplinary literacy (Unstad & Fjørtoft, 2021), and religious literacy (Seiple & Hoover, 2021; Walker et al., 2021) indicate that higher-level cognitive engagement can be increased through interpretive and reflective activities on religious texts and phenomena. In the perspective of multicultural education, this approach aligns with efforts to build students' critical and dialogical awareness in understanding difference (Banks, 2008).

Second, strategies that emphasize the integration of critical digital literacy into curricula and learning practices. Findings in the SLR table show that the use of technology, such as e-learning and mobile learning, not only increases student engagement but also simultaneously strengthens religious and digital literacy (Y. Hanafi et al., 2019, 2020). In addition, integrating technology and even Artificial Intelligence in Islamic Education opens up opportunities for instructional innovation, though it still requires ethical and pedagogical readiness (Achruh et al., 2024). In this context, critical digital literacy cannot be positioned as an added skill, but rather as an integral component in the design of multicultural PAI instruction. This is especially important at the secondary school level, where students confront complex and potentially biased digital information flows, requiring strong evaluative abilities in understanding religious content.

Third, strategies based on dialogical, participatory, and collaborative learning. Literature findings show that inclusive, actively participatory instructional approaches can increase student engagement and understanding in multicultural contexts (Awang-Hashim et al., 2019). In addition, the integration of inclusive multicultural Islamic pedagogy has proven effective in internalizing the values of tolerance, peace, and openness (Noe et al., 2026). This approach is further reinforced by the importance of the religious literacy process in building understanding of moderation and inclusivity (A. H. Hanafi, 2022). In the context of secondary school learning, this strategy is relevant for developing students' abilities to engage in dialogue, collaborate, and constructively understand the diversity of religious perspectives. However, successful implementation depends heavily on teacher readiness and the support of a collaborative instructional ecosystem.

Although all three strategic patterns indicate a progressive direction in the development of learning, the literature also suggests that their implementation remains partial and not yet integrated within a comprehensive instructional design framework. Most studies stop at identifying strategies or implementing them in a limited manner, without systematically linking them to the stages of learning, evaluation mechanisms, or measurable learning outcomes. In fact, findings related to the importance of culturally responsive assessment (Nortvedt et al., 2020) and context-sensitive multicultural learning evaluation (Lawson et al., 2024) show that the evaluation dimension is an important aspect that has not been widely integrated into instructional design.

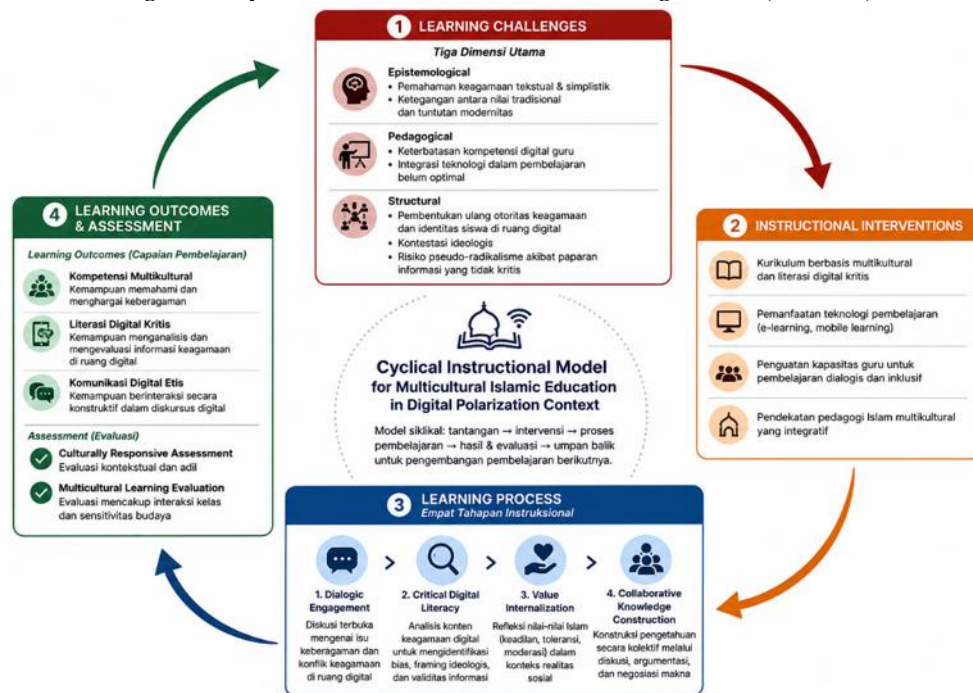
Therefore, a coherent, systematic, and practical learning model framework is needed one capable of integrating all three strategic patterns into a unified instructional design. In the context of Islamic Education (PAI) at the secondary school level, this model must be able to simultaneously connect epistemological, pedagogical, and structural dimensions, as well as accommodate the integration of critical digital literacy, multicultural values, and dialogic learning practices. This framework forms the basis for developing a digital-based multicultural Islamic Education (PAI) learning model that is not only theoretically robust but also practical in responding to the complexities of digital polarization.

#### ***Proposed Instructional Design Model for Multicultural Islamic Education in Digital Environments***

Based on synthesizing findings in the SLR table and the analysis in the previous subchapter, various studies on multicultural education, digital literacy, and Islamic Education (PAI) learning demonstrate significant progress. Nevertheless, the literature still displays a fragmentary tendency, with these three domains not yet integrated into a systematic and operational learning framework. Although dialogic, reflective, and critical digital literacy-based approaches have begun to be adopted in several studies, their implementation remains partial and has not yet been formulated into a comprehensive instructional design, especially in the context of learning at the secondary school level. Furthermore, digital literacy is often still positioned as a technical skill, separate from the epistemological construction of religious education, while multicultural education tends to be placed in a normative domain (Evolvi, 2018; Potter, 2019). This condition has resulted in Islamic Education (PAI) learning not being fully capable of adaptively and critically responding to the complexities of digital polarization.

Based on this literature synthesis, this study formulates an instructional design model for multicultural Islamic Education (PAI) that is integrative, systematic, and contextual as an operational framework for learning in the digital era. This model functions not only as a conceptual construct but also operationally in classroom practice, with the PAI teacher as the main instructional designer, supported by the school institution and the students' social context. Structurally, this model consists of four interrelated main components: (1) learning challenges, (2) instructional interventions, (3) stage-based learning processes, and (4) learning outcomes together with assessment mechanisms. These four components form an adaptive learning cycle that is relevant for Islamic Education (PAI) learning at the secondary school level (Banks, 2008; H. A. Campbell & Tsuria, 2021).

Figure 2. Cyclic Multicultural Islamic Learning Model (CMILM)



Source: Author

The first component, namely learning challenges, encompasses three main dimensions: epistemological, pedagogical, and structural. In the epistemological dimension, findings in the SLR table indicate a tendency toward textual and simplistic religious understanding in digital spaces (Zuhri & Pabbajah, 2026), as well as tensions between traditional values and the demands of modernity (Sahin, 2018). In the pedagogical dimension, teachers' limited digital competence and the suboptimal integration of technology in learning constitute the main challenges (Dalimunthe et al., 2023; Achruh et al., 2024). Meanwhile, in the structural dimension, the digital environment reshapes religious authority and student identities (Hefner, 2022), creates ideological contestations (Jubba et al., 2022), and has the potential to fuel pseudo-radicalism due to uncritical exposure to information (Suyanto et al., 2022). These three dimensions form the basis for designing contextually relevant, needs-based learning interventions.

The second component, namely instructional intervention, serves as a bridge between the identification of challenges and the implementation of learning. This intervention includes the development of a curriculum based on multicultural and critical digital literacy, the utilization of educational technologies such as e-learning and mobile learning (Y. Hanafi et al., 2019, 2020), and the strengthening of teacher capacity in facilitating dialogic and inclusive learning (Aderibigbe et al., 2023). In addition, an integrative multicultural Islamic pedagogy approach

has proven effective in internalizing the values of tolerance, peace, and inclusivity (Noe et al., 2026). Thus, this intervention is not merely conceptual but is actualized in implementable and contextually relevant instructional designs aligned with digital dynamics.

The third component, namely the learning process, is realized through systematic instructional stages elaborating on the strategies in the SLR table. These stages include: first, dialogic engagement, an initial stage encouraging students to discuss issues of diversity and religious conflict in digital spaces openly, in line with dialogic approaches (O'Grady & Jackson, 2020). Second, critical digital literacy, an analytical stage examining digital religious content to identify bias, ideological framing, and the validity of information. Third, value internalization, a reflective process linking Islamic values such as justice, tolerance, and moderation to social realities. Fourth, collaborative knowledge construction, a stage of collective knowledge construction through discussion, argumentation, and negotiation of meaning, supported by religious literacy and participatory learning approaches (Unstad & Fjørtoft, 2021; Walker et al., 2021). These stages reflect a shift toward learning that emphasizes interaction, reflection, and active knowledge construction (Banks, 2008).

The fourth component, namely learning outcomes and assessment, is designed to ensure that the learning process yields measurable and relevant achievements. Learning outcomes cover three major dimensions: (1) multicultural competence, i.e., the ability to understand and appreciate diversity; (2) critical digital literacy, i.e., the ability to analyze and evaluate religious information in digital spaces; and (3) ethical communication skills, i.e., the ability to interact constructively in digital discourse. To measure these outcomes, a culturally responsive assessment approach is used, emphasizing contextual and fair evaluation (Nortvedt et al., 2020), as well as assessment of multicultural learning that encompasses classroom interaction and cultural sensitivity dimensions (Lawson et al., 2024). Thus, learning success is measured not only in terms of cognition but also through the transformation of attitudes and social digital skills of learners.

Overall, this instructional model operates cyclically, beginning with the identification of challenges, the design of interventions, the implementation of learning processes, and the evaluation of outcomes which provide feedback for further instructional development. This model offers a framework that is not only theoretically robust through the integration of multicultural education, digital literacy, and Islamic Religious Education (PAI), but also applicable in secondary school instructional practice. Therefore, PAI is positioned as a transformative learning space that not only transmits values, but also develops critical awareness and learners' adaptive competence in facing the complexities of digital society.

Conceptually, this model also makes a significant theoretical contribution by integrating three domains that have traditionally been studied separately: multicultural Islamic education, digital literacy, and digital context-based instructional design. Unlike previous research, which tends to place multicultural education in a normative framework (Banks, 2008; Nieto, 2017) and digital literacy as a technical skill set (Potter, 2019), this model integrates both within an instructional design framework that is operational and contextual to the phenomenon of digital polarization. Thus, this model not only broadens the study of Islamic education from a multicultural perspective, but also opens opportunities for further empirical testing across various PAI learning contexts in the digital era, especially at the secondary school level as the main focus of this study.

Although this study makes a conceptual contribution by formulating an instructional design model for multicultural Islamic education in a digital context, there are several limitations that should be noted. First, this study uses a systematic literature review approach that relies on synthesizing previous studies, so the resulting model remains at the conceptual level and has not yet received empirical validation in real instructional practice, particularly in PAI learning contexts at the secondary school level. This limitation is a general characteristic of literature-based studies, which tend to produce theoretical frameworks requiring further testing through field studies (Snyder, 2019).

Second, the literature analyzed remains limited to certain databases, i.e., Scopus, so there is the possibility that a number of relevant studies have not been fully accommodated. This

limitation includes the potential oversight of research from certain local or regional contexts, as well as studies specifically examining the implementation of multicultural education at the secondary level. Moreover, the diversity of social, cultural, and institutional contexts in the implementation of multicultural education is not yet fully represented in the developed model, so the generalization of findings must be made cautiously.

Based on these limitations, future research is recommended to empirically test this model through experimental, quasi-experimental, or case study designs in PAI instructional contexts in formal educational institutions, especially at the secondary school level as the main focus of this study. Such testing is important to assess the model's effectiveness in enhancing multicultural competence, critical digital literacy, and students' ethical communication skills, as indicated in the empirical findings in the SLR table related to the effectiveness of dialogic approaches and the integration of digital literacy.

Additionally, future research needs to be directed toward the development of more specific, standardized, and contextual assessment instruments to measure learning outcomes in the dynamic digital ecosystem (Redecker, 2017). Strengthening this evaluation aspect becomes crucial to ensure that the cognitive, affective, and social-digital dimensions of learners can be measured comprehensively.

Furthermore, the utilization of learning analytics has emerged as a promising research direction to enhance the relevance and sustainability of this model in responding to the development of digital education. The integration of artificial intelligence-based learning technologies also opens up opportunities to support the personalization of learning, real-time monitoring of learning progress, and analysis of student interaction patterns in digital environments. Thus, future research is expected not only to empirically test the validity of the model but also to develop pedagogical innovations that are adaptive to the ever-evolving dynamics of the digital education ecosystem.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the synthesis of findings in the SLR table, this study yields three main conclusions regarding efforts to reframe Multicultural Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in the context of digital polarization.

First, amidst the fragmentation of religious discourse and the shifting of authority toward digital spaces, multicultural PAI has emerged as a strategic necessity that is no longer limited to the transmission of normative doctrines but also serves as a space for the development of critical, dialogic, and contextual awareness. This becomes increasingly relevant at the secondary school level, where students interact intensively with various digital religious sources. Information polarization, the strengthening of echo chambers, and the openness of religious knowledge production on digital media demand the repositioning of PAI to facilitate inclusive and reflective learning. In this context, the integration of multiculturalism perspectives with critical digital literacy is a key foundation for developing students who not only understand Islamic teachings comprehensively but are also able to respond to differences and information flows wisely and responsibly.

Second, the strengthening of multicultural PAI faces integrated multidimensional challenges, which include epistemological, pedagogical, and structural dimensions. On the epistemological dimension, the dominance of textual-doctrinal approaches restricts the development of dialogic and reflective learning, as indicated by SLR findings on the tendency toward simplistic religious understanding in digital spaces. On the pedagogical dimension, limited teacher competence and the lack of integration of critical digital literacy into the curriculum are the main obstacles in managing digital religious discourse. Meanwhile, on the structural dimension, the algorithmic culture of social media encourages the formation of information bias and echo chambers that hinder the internalization of values of tolerance and openness. This complexity underscores that PAI issues are systemic and thus require a holistic, integrative approach, grounded in critical awareness of the digital ecosystem, particularly in the context of secondary school learning.

Third, the transformation of multicultural PAI in the context of digital polarization demands the integrated implementation of several main strategies, including the reconstruction of a PAI paradigm based on the values of rahmatan lil 'alamin, the development of an integrative curriculum, dialogic-participatory learning design, strengthening of teacher competencies, and cross-stakeholder collaboration. Based on this synthesis, this study formulates an integrative and systematic instructional design model for multicultural PAI that dynamically connects the dimensions of learning challenges, instructional interventions, stages of the learning process, as well as learning outcomes and assessment mechanisms within a cyclical framework. This model functions not only as a theoretical construct but also as an operational framework that can be implemented in curriculum development, learning design, and evaluation practices that are adaptive to the dynamics of digital polarization, particularly at the secondary school level.

Thus, strengthening multicultural PAI is not only a response to the challenges of digital polarization, but also serves as a strategic force in building a tolerant, inclusive, and civilized culture of diversity. In a plural and dynamic digital ecosystem, PAI is expected to produce a generation of Muslims who not only possess deep religious understanding but are also adaptive, critical, and capable of contributing constructively in the digital public sphere. The directed and sustainable implementation of instructional design models is key to realizing adaptive, reflective, and transformative PAI learning in responding sustainably to the challenges of digital polarization.

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