

Historical Traces That Tell A Story: Fostering Islamic History Literacy Among Students

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the concept of 'storytelling historical traces' as an innovative approach to enhancing Islamic history literacy amongst students in the digital age. The rapid development of digital technology has transformed the way students access and understand historical information, shifting learning patterns from traditional memorisation-based methods to more interactive and technology-driven experiences. However, this transformation also presents challenges, particularly the spread of historical misinformation and distorted narratives in digital spaces. This research employs a systematic literature review to analyse relevant studies on narrative-based learning, contextual teaching approaches, and the integration of digital media in Islamic history education. The findings indicate that storytelling-based historical learning can strengthen students' historical awareness, emotional engagement, and moral internalisation by presenting historical events as meaningful narratives rather than mere chronological facts. Furthermore, the integration of contextual learning strategies, digital media and interactive technologies—such as multimedia, social media and virtual learning environments—significantly enhances students' engagement with and understanding of Islamic history. Nevertheless, the study also highlights the importance of digital literacy and historical literacy in mitigating the risks of misinformation and historical distortion on online platforms. Overall, the combination of narrative-based learning and digital transformation offers a promising strategy for developing students' critical thinking skills and strengthening their Islamic historical literacy in the digital age.

Keywords: Islamic Historical Literacy; Storytelling Approach; Digital Learning; Historical Education; Contextual Learning; Digital Literacy

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INTRODUCTION

In today's digital age, Islamic historical literacy for students is crucial for building a deep understanding of Muslim civilisation, which is rich in religious, scientific and social values. Historical traces, such as the spread of Islam through the Wali Songo or the contributions of scholars like Ibn Sina, are not merely chronological facts but living stories that can foster motivation to learn and a sense of Islamic identity. The narrative approach of 'storytelling history' enables students to connect the past with their daily lives, so that literacy is not merely rote learning but a meaningful experience (Laili, 2024).

These 'storytelling' traces of Islamic history offer an innovative method to address students' low interest in the subject of Islamic Cultural History (SKI), where literacy acts as a bridge

between textual knowledge and interactive experiences. Through field trips to historical sites or the analysis of classical Islamic texts, pupils can explore the struggles of Islamic scholars and Islamic civilisation, as seen in literacy-based learning practices that have increased interest by up to 59.1 per cent (Simanjuntak and Rahman 2025) .

The theory of narrative-based Islamic historical literacy is grounded in a phased learning approach—comprising introductory, core and concluding stages—which integrates observation, interviews and documentation to enrich pupils’ understanding at primary level. This history textbook aims to foster literacy through written records, folklore and legends of Islamic civilisation, with an emphasis on strengthening Islamic literacy from an early age so that pupils can master religious knowledge contextually from the classical to the modern period. Consequently, this programme is expected to enhance pupils’ ability to analyse the causes and effects of historical events, such as the spread of Islam across the Archipelago, through a heuristic approach and source criticism (Himayah 2021) .

Teachers of Islamic Cultural History can utilise these narrative threads through contextual approaches such as visual media, parental involvement, and assessment projects, which have been shown to enhance pupils’ understanding of Islamic history as a guide for daily life. This approach not only strengthens historical literacy but also fosters critical thinking regarding the development of the Muslim community, in line with the primary education curriculum which combines historical facts with practical applications. As a result, pupils will be more enthusiastic about studying Islamic civilisation as an integral part of their identity, with a significant increase in participation during the second learning cycle (Gustina and Novita 2025) .

METHOD

This study employs a literature review method using a qualitative narrative approach. The choice of this method is based on the research objective to explore, synthesise and reconstruct various theoretical findings and pedagogical practices relevant to efforts to foster Islamic historical literacy. Through this method, the research transforms into an intellectual journey to analyse how the narrative of ‘storytelling history’ can serve as a bridge between past events and the horizon of understanding of learners in the contemporary era.

Data collection was carried out through a systematic search of reputable national and international academic journal databases (such as SINTA and Google Scholar). The search strategy utilised interrelated keywords, namely Islamic historical literacy, the narrative approach, contextual learning, and digital literacy in history education. The inclusion criteria encompassed articles with an in-depth focus on literacy development at primary and secondary school levels, as well as literature specifically addressing the effectiveness of learning media in constructing meaningful historical understanding.

Data analysis was carried out through a thorough and reflective content analysis process. The first stage was data reduction, in which the researcher selected literature that resonated strongly with the concept of ‘narrative history’ to ensure that every reference used made a tangible contribution to the research focus. The second stage is data presentation, in which findings from various sources are categorised according to key themes such as the cognitive characteristics of learners, the role of teachers, the use of contextual media, and the challenges of disinformation in cyberspace. The final stage is synthesis—the process of combining these various pieces of information into a coherent, comprehensive argument.

Through this approach, the researcher is able to establish a ‘common thread’ linking modern history education theory with humanistic and innovative pedagogical practices. This analysis does not merely stop at a theoretical exposition but seeks to address the key challenge in the teaching of Islamic Cultural History (SKI): how to transform historical narratives—which are often perceived as rigid—into vivid, contextual and inspiring narratives. Consequently, this method serves as an appropriate tool for providing a comprehensive overview of strategies to foster relevant and transformative Islamic historical literacy among learners in the digital age.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Theoretical Framework

1.1 Theoretical Foundations of Narrative-Based Islamic History Literacy

The 'storytelling history' approach offers an innovative solution to shift the paradigm of Islamic Cultural History (SKI) learning, which has long been dominated by rigid rote learning methods. Through this narrative approach, the learning of history is transformed into a process of internalising meaningful values (meaningful learning). The main foundation of this literacy movement is to foster historical consciousness in learners so that history is no longer viewed as a pile of dead texts or a tedious chronology of dates, but rather as a valuable source of life lessons (*ibrah*) (Jumati 2022). The teaching of history must be able to take pupils' cognitive understanding beyond written texts so that they can gain a deep understanding of the essence of the development of Islamic civilisation.

Through narrative methods, the reconstruction of major events—such as the cultural *da'wah* (proselytising) of the Wali Songo or the scientific contributions of medieval Muslim scholars—can be presented as dynamic life stories. Given that the cognitive development of primary-age pupils is still at the concrete operational stage, presenting history in the form of storytelling is highly effective in bridging their understanding of abstract concepts and the laws of causality underlying an event (Sugiarti, Priatna, and Nawawi 2017). Through the telling of structured narrative stories, pupils are encouraged to engage in simple historical reasoning without overburdening their cognitive capacity, which in turn boosts their interest in the subject matter.

The most significant psychological and pedagogical impact of presenting history as a story is the development of emotional connections and historical empathy in learners. Narratives that touch upon the struggles, humanism and exemplary conduct of Muslim scholars and scientists can ignite students' intrinsic motivation to emulate the morality of these figures. The internalisation of heroic character values (*uswah hasanah*) through this historical narrative literacy serves as a vital tool in strengthening children's Islamic identity from an early age (Azizeh 2021). Thus, the history of Islamic culture becomes not merely exam material but functions as an ethical guide in their daily lives.

In practical terms, strengthening this narrative literacy requires the integration of written texts with learning media capable of stimulating pupils' visual and kinesthetic senses. One effective strategy is the use of comics or history-based picture stories, which can simplify the complexity of historical events in Islamic civilisation into visual forms that are appealing to primary-aged children (Waluyanto 2005). The use of this chronological, illustration-based medium has been shown not only to significantly increase pupils' interest in reading but also to make it easier for them to remember and absorb the moral messages contained within the narratives of Muslim figures.

Furthermore, the greatest challenge in bringing 'narrative history' to life in the modern era is the limited attention span of children, which is largely absorbed by digital devices and the online world. Consequently, educators are required to be able to transform conventional literacy models into an adaptive digital literacy movement, for example by producing interactive multimedia content or educational animated videos that are engaging for pupils (Jamaludin, Pribadi, and Arrasyidi 2023). When material on the history of Islamic culture is presented via platforms familiar to the daily lives of the digital generation, distortions of information regarding the history of the religion can be minimised whilst simultaneously strengthening the foundations of their Islamic identity in cyberspace.

1.2 The Urgency of a Contextual Approach in SKI Teaching

A The teaching of Islamic Cultural History (SKI) at various levels of education often faces perceptual barriers, where pupils regard historical material as a cognitive burden characterised by rote learning and detached from the realities of life. The urgency of applying a contextual approach, or Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL), is paramount to shift the learning paradigm from a verbalistic approach towards meaningful learning. This approach enables teachers to link historical material to the real-life contexts of pupils, so that historical

values do not merely remain theoretical concepts but become practical guides for navigating contemporary social dynamics (Johariyah, 2009).

The importance of the contextual approach lies in its ability to actively engage learners through components such as inquiry, questioning and modelling. By using this approach, history is no longer merely a passive narrative of the past, but rather a laboratory of values that demands students to think critically, collaborate within a learning community, and reflect on each historical event in relation to present-day situations. The implementation of CTL has been shown to improve the quality of learning and students' intrinsic motivation, as they feel that the material being studied is directly relevant to their life experiences, which ultimately minimises boredom during the learning process (Lestari et al., 2022).

Furthermore, the importance of a contextual approach also lies in its ability to facilitate the transfer of knowledge more effectively. Through learning strategies that integrate real-world experiences, pupils are guided to establish connections between historical concepts and the application of character values such as tolerance, honesty and leadership within the context of their daily lives. This is in line with the principles of constructivism, which emphasise that knowledge is not merely the result of transfer from the teacher, but rather the result of pupils' mental construction through relevant learning experiences. When pupils are given the freedom to link historical events to current issues – such as conflict management or social media ethics – the process of internalising Islamic values becomes more robust and practical (Fathurrohman, 2017).

1.3 Cognitive Characteristics and Historical Imagination of Primary-Age Pupils

A Primary-age pupils (approximately 7–12 years old) possess highly distinctive cognitive characteristics as they are at the concrete operational stage of cognitive development according to Jean Piaget's theory, where their thinking has become organised, rational and logical, yet remains heavily reliant on physical objects or real-life experiences that can be seen and experienced directly. At this stage, children are already capable of using logical thinking to understand real-world events, but they are not yet able to think fully abstractly or engage in deductive speculation about concepts that lack a physical form. These characteristics are particularly important in the study of history, as history is, by its very nature, the study of past events that cannot be physically accessed; consequently, primary school pupils tend to struggle to understand concepts of historical time, complex cause-and-effect relationships, and the socio-cultural contexts of the past without the aid of visualisation or concrete narratives (Marinda 2020) .

Although their capacity for abstract thinking is still limited, primary school pupils possess a rapidly developing imagination and a high level of curiosity, which form an important foundation for developing historical imagination. Historical imagination is the ability to visualise the lives, feelings, motivations and contexts of people in the past, as well as the ability to place oneself in historical situations not experienced first-hand. In primary-aged children, historical imagination is still simple in nature and heavily influenced by personal experiences, stories they have heard, and visualisations presented through pictures, films or educational drama. Children are able to construct a strong imaginary world and use symbolic thinking to represent the world through words and images, which supports the development of memory and historical imagination, even though this is still in a form that is not yet fully logical or systematic (Setianingsih 2023) .

The development of historical imagination in primary-age pupils is also influenced by their still high level of egocentrism, whereby they tend to understand historical events from their own perspective rather than from that of people who lived in the past. Consequently, their historical imagination is often anachronistic (blurring temporal boundaries) and they find it difficult to distinguish between present-day reality and life in the past without the guidance of a seasoned teacher. To enhance historical imagination, a learning model is required that can bring historical events to life through approaches such as edutainment, digital storytelling, role-play, or the use of engaging visual media, so that children can visualise life in the past more clearly and meaningfully. Thus, the characteristics of concrete operational cognition – which combine limited logical thinking with a vivid imagination – form a vital foundation for the

development of historical thinking skills in primary-age pupils, and teachers need to design learning strategies appropriate to this stage of development so that the study of history can become an engaging and profound experience (Syah et al. 2026) .

1.4 The Role of Schools and Families in Literacy

Literacy is a fundamental competence that encompasses not only the ability to read and write but also involves essential skills such as critical thinking, understanding complex information, and communicating effectively in everyday life. In building a strong culture of literacy amongst pupils, schools and families play complementary and inseparable roles, as both are the primary educational environments that shape children's character and learning habits from an early age. The family, as the first and most influential environment in a child's life, plays a central role as the foundation of literacy; the family environment plays a vital role in the literacy development of primary school children through parental involvement and a supportive home atmosphere, which can enhance children's reading and writing skills. The results of community service initiatives indicate that a supportive family environment – such as the presence of books at home, shared reading time with parents, and parents' positive attitudes towards education – significantly improves children's literacy skills (Khair et al. 2025) .

Schools act as formal educational institutions that optimise and develop the literacy skills first cultivated within the family through structured programmes such as the School Literacy Movement (GLS), which aims to foster pupils' interest in reading and improve their reading skills. Factors supporting the School Literacy Movement include a strong commitment from the headteacher to implement the GLS, the roles of teachers and pupils as well as other school stakeholders in ensuring the movement's success, and the availability of sufficient funding to stock the library with books. The roles of families, schools and the government in building a culture of literacy in education include fostering an interest in reading from as early an age as possible through book subsidies, optimising the role of local libraries, valuing written works, and securing political support from the Government and the House of Representatives. However, factors hindering the School Literacy Movement include the limited number of books available in libraries, low reading interest among pupils, and a lack of parental involvement in the School Literacy Movement activities (Suswandari 2018) .

Collaboration between schools and families is key to the success of building a sustainable culture of literacy, as synergy between schools, families and the community is vital for fostering and maintaining a culture of reading in primary and secondary schools. The community's role in fostering a reading culture in schools includes providing literacy facilities such as reading corners and mini-libraries, donating books, organising group reading activities, delivering literacy training for teachers and pupils, and establishing literacy communities that collaborate with schools. Active community involvement can boost pupils' interest and motivation to read, enrich the range of reading materials available at school, and create a social environment that supports sustainable literacy activities. When schools and families work together to build pupils' literacy, pupils receive consistent stimulation from both environments, resulting in better development of literacy skills and lifelong reading habits (Aisyah et al. 2025) .

1.5 Digital Transformation and Historical Literacy in the Cyber Age

Digital transformation has brought about significant changes to the concept of literacy, which now encompasses not only traditional reading and writing skills but also technical skills, critical understanding, and the management of digital information within the context of the digital age. The digital age has fundamentally altered the landscape of human life, bringing about significant transformations in the ways we communicate, learn, participate, and access historical information that was previously only available through physical books or conventional archives. In the context of history education, digital transformation opens up vast opportunities to make history lessons more vivid, personalised and interactive through the integration of technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI), virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR), which enable pupils to explore the past in a more contextual and engaging manner. AI technology enables learning to be tailored to the needs, abilities and pace of each individual student, whilst VR allows students to immerse themselves in key historical

events—such as experiencing the atmosphere of the Industrial Revolution or witnessing the struggle for independence first-hand, as if they were present at the time (Putrayasa, Suwindia, and Winangun 2024) .

However, alongside the opportunities offered by digital transformation, there are significant challenges regarding historical literacy in the digital age, particularly concerning pupils' ability to evaluate the validity of historical information sources— which are increasingly accessible but often unverified. The main findings of the research indicate that, although schools have integrated digital technology through the use of PowerPoint and educational videos, pupils' ability to evaluate the validity of historical information sources remains very limited. Pupils demonstrate a high degree of reliance on social media platforms such as TikTok and the Google search engine, with a preference for visual content over text, which has the potential to reduce their in-depth understanding of complex historical contexts. Challenges such as historical misinformation, disinformation, the digital divide, and the impact of social media on critical reading skills are key concerns in the development of historical literacy in the digital age (Andrianto and Romadi 2025) .

In the context of the cyber age, the boundary between physical reality and the digital world is becoming increasingly blurred, meaning that the digital space has now become an integral part of our lives in accessing and understanding history. Digital literacy serves as the foundation for national defence in the digital age, where threats to the nation no longer take physical form but manifest as historical disinformation, propaganda and narratives that undermine national identity. Therefore, strengthening digital literacy requires a holistic approach that integrates the development of fundamental literacy, critical thinking skills and technological competence to counter historical disinformation and misinformation that could undermine the younger generation's understanding of history. Education plays a key role in bridging the digital literacy and historical literacy gaps, with recommendations including the strengthening of education policies, improved access to technology, and innovative learning strategies that integrate traditional and digital literacy (Putrayasa et al. 2024) .

2. Innovative Learning Practices and Contextual Media in Fostering Islamic Historical Literacy

2.1 The Concept of Innovative Learning in the Context of Islamic History

Innovative learning in the context of Islamic history is a learning approach designed to create an active, meaningful and contextual learning process by placing learners at the centre of the learning process. In this approach, the study of Islamic history is no longer understood as the mere memorisation of figures, dates and events, but as a process of understanding the meaning, values and lessons contained within each historical event. The innovative approach requires teachers to provide learning experiences that enable learners to construct their own knowledge through activities such as discussion, analysis of historical sources, and reflection on the values of Islamic history. This is in line with research findings which show that innovative and contextual Islamic history learning is capable of enhancing pupils' participation and deepening their understanding of the values of Islamic history (Izzati and Achadi 2026) .

Furthermore, innovative learning in the history of Islam is also closely linked to constructivist theory, which emphasises that knowledge is not transferred directly from teacher to pupil but is actively constructed by learners through their learning experiences. In the context of teaching the history of Islam, this approach encourages pupils to think critically, analyse the causes and effects of historical events, and connect past events with present-day circumstances. Research indicates that the application of a constructivist approach in Islamic history teaching can enhance pupils' critical thinking skills and conceptual understanding, as they are actively engaged in the learning process rather than merely being passive recipients of information (Saputra and Muqowim 2024) .

Furthermore, innovative teaching in Islamic history also emphasises the importance of using media and learning strategies relevant to contemporary developments, particularly in delivering engaging and contextualised learning. Media such as audio-visual materials, digital learning, historical storytelling and interactive applications have been shown to boost pupils' motivation to learn and understand Islamic history. This demonstrates that innovation in

learning is not only about methods but also the use of media capable of linking historical material to the reality of pupils' lives. Consequently, the teaching of Islamic history becomes more vibrant, less monotonous, and capable of building a stronger literacy in Islamic history (Sa'adiyah 2023) .

Furthermore, innovative teaching in the context of Islamic history also plays a vital role in developing pupils' Islamic historical literacy. Islamic historical literacy encompasses not only the ability to understand historical facts, but also the ability to interpret, analyse and reflect upon the values contained within that history. Through innovative learning, pupils are encouraged not only to know 'what happened', but also to understand 'why those events occurred' and 'what significance they hold for life today'. Research shows that digital and contextual SKI learning models are capable of enhancing pupils' ability to relate moral and historical values to everyday life, thereby making their historical literacy more meaningful and applicable (Tukang 2023) .

2.2 Islamic Historical Literacy among Learners

Islamic historical literacy among pupils is the ability to understand, interpret and relate Islamic historical events to the context of contemporary life. This literacy does not merely emphasise the rote memorisation of historical facts such as figures, dates and events, but also requires historical thinking skills, including cause-and-effect analysis, contextual understanding and the extraction of values from a historical event. In the teaching of Islamic Cultural History (SKI), historical literacy plays a vital role in building students' understanding so that they not only know history but are also able to draw lessons and moral values from it. This is in line with research stating that SKI education plays a significant role in enhancing historical awareness whilst instilling Islamic values in students from an early age (Munawir and Faidah 2026) .

Furthermore, Islamic history literacy is also closely linked to pupils' ability to read and critically understand historical sources. Pupils are expected to be able to distinguish between historical facts, interpretations, and the values contained within an event. This ability is important because Islamic history is not merely narrative in nature but also contains social, cultural, and spiritual meanings that can shape pupils' character. Research indicates that strengthening literacy in Islamic history education can be achieved through the use of diverse learning resources, such as digital libraries, interactive teaching materials, and technology-based learning media, which can deepen students' understanding of Islamic history (Solikhin and Winarti 2026) .

Furthermore, the development of Islamic history literacy can be strengthened through the application of innovative learning models that encourage pupils to be active participants in the learning process. Models such as Project-Based Learning and digital-based learning have been proven to increase pupils' engagement in understanding Islamic history in a more critical and reflective manner. In this regard, teachers act as facilitators who guide pupils in exploring the historical traces of Islam and linking them to life values. Research indicates that contextual and interactive innovations in Islamic history teaching can significantly enhance pupils' interest in learning, conceptual understanding, and historical literacy (Izzati and Achadi 2026) .

2.3 Traces of Islamic History as a Source of Contextual Learning

Traces of Islamic history as a source of contextual learning comprise all forms of historical heritage that can be used as learning resources to link historical material to the realities of pupils' lives. These traces may take the form of physical relics, such as historic mosques, the tombs of Islamic figures, manuscripts, artefacts, and buildings from Islamic civilisation, as well as non-physical relics, such as religious traditions, Islamic cultural values, and Islamic social practices within society. In the teaching of Islamic Cultural History (SKI), the existence of these historical traces is of great importance as they can help pupils understand history in a more concrete way rather than merely in the abstract. This is in line with research showing that context-based learning resources and historical environments can enhance pupils' understanding because the material is directly linked to observable reality (Lestari, Pratiwi, and Nasion 2022) .

Furthermore, the use of traces of Islamic history in contextual learning also plays a role in enhancing pupils' critical and historical thinking skills. By observing, analysing or studying these historical traces, pupils can understand the cause-and-effect relationships of historical events and see their relevance to contemporary life. Learning based on historical traces enables pupils not only to passively receive information but also to engage in the process of analysing and interpreting historical sources. Research indicates that a contextual learning approach in the study of Islamic history is capable of improving pupils' learning outcomes and motivation, as the material is linked to the real-life situations they encounter on a daily basis (Lestari et al. 2022).

Furthermore, the historical legacy of Islam also plays a vital role in shaping pupils' character through the internalisation of historical values. Every historical artefact contains not only factual information but also moral values such as struggle, exemplary conduct, tolerance and the spirit of Islamic da'wah. Through learning based on this historical legacy, pupils can draw lessons from figures and events in Islamic history to apply in their daily lives. Research into Islamic Studies (SKI) education indicates that the integration of Islamic historical values into the curriculum can strengthen pupils' character whilst enhancing their historical awareness of Islamic civilisation (Uswatun Hasanah 2020).

2.4 Contextual Learning Media in Islamic History Literacy

Contextual learning resources in Islamic history literacy encompass all forms of learning materials used to help learners understand events in Islamic history in a more tangible, interactive and meaningful way. In the teaching of Islamic Cultural History (SKI), these resources serve not only as aids for delivering content but also as a bridge between abstract historical concepts and the learners' real-life experiences. The use of media such as documentary videos, images of historical sites, interactive maps and virtual museums makes the study of Islamic history easier to understand, as pupils can see visual representations of historical events. This is in line with research showing that audio-visual learning media in SKI can enhance conceptual understanding and help pupils grasp historical values more effectively (Munawir, Soleha, et al. 2024).

Furthermore, digital learning media play a vital role in enhancing pupils' Islamic history literacy in the modern era. Media such as learning applications, interactive presentations, historical films and educational videos can boost pupils' motivation to learn and their engagement in the learning process. With the use of digital media, pupils are not merely recipients of information but can also interact more actively with the learning material. Research indicates that the use of information technology-based media in Islamic history education can improve pupils' learning outcomes, as the material is presented in a more engaging, systematic and easily understandable manner (Resky, Saputra, and Razilu 2025).

Furthermore, developments in educational technology have enabled the emergence of more innovative learning media such as virtual reality (VR), augmented reality (AR), and other interactive digital media. These technologies allow learners to experience a more immersive learning environment; for example, 'visiting' sites of Islamic history without having to travel to the location in person. This is highly beneficial in bringing the traces of Islamic history to life within the learning process. Research indicates that the integration of technologies such as AR into history teaching can significantly enhance conceptual understanding, student engagement, and historical digital literacy (Deviyanti, Hidayat, and Ervina 2025).

Furthermore, contextual learning media also support the application of active learning approaches such as Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL), Problem-Based Learning (PBL), and Project-Based Learning (PjBL). In these approaches, learners do not merely receive information but actively explore, analyse, and present the outcomes of their learning using the media provided. For example, pupils can create a digital project on the historical traces of Islam in their local area or analyse historical videos to identify the values contained within them. Research indicates that contextual-based learning is capable of enhancing the effectiveness of Islamic Studies learning as it connects the subject matter to pupils' real lives (Munawir, Aini, and Andriani 2024).

2.5 The Role of Teachers in Strengthening Islamic History Literacy

The role of teachers in strengthening Islamic history literacy is crucial because teachers function not only as conveyors of subject matter but also as facilitators who guide pupils' thought processes. In the teaching of Islamic Cultural History (SKI), teachers are required to create active, critical and meaningful learning experiences so that pupils do not merely memorise historical events, but are able to understand the meaning, values and relevance of that history in their lives. Teachers play a role in helping pupils explore the traces of Islamic history through discussion, source analysis and reflection, so that their historical literacy develops optimally. This is in line with the concept of active learning, which places pupils at the centre of the learning process (M. Firman, Ika Ratih Sulistiani 2021) .

Furthermore, teachers play a vital role in linking the study of Islamic history to pupils' real lives through a contextual approach. Using this approach, teachers can utilise traces of Islamic history in the local environment, stories of Islamic figures, and socio-religious phenomena as learning resources. This makes learning more meaningful as pupils can see the relevance of history to their own lives. The Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) approach has been proven effective in improving pupils' historical understanding and literacy (Lestari et al. 2022) .

3. Challenges of the Digital Age in Making History Accessible

3.1 Disinformation and Distortion of History in the Digital Sphere

The development of digital technology and social media has transformed the way society accesses historical information. Whereas historical knowledge was previously largely acquired through books, archives or formal education, historical information can now be easily accessed via platforms such as TikTok, YouTube, Instagram and X. However, this ease of access also creates opportunities for the emergence of historical disinformation and distortion. Historical disinformation refers to the deliberate dissemination of false historical information to influence public opinion, whilst historical distortion involves the reinterpretation of historical events in a manner inconsistent with facts or historical evidence. In the digital sphere, information that is sensational, controversial and emotional tends to spread more rapidly than information based on academic research. Consequently, the public often accepts inaccurate historical narratives without verifying the sources used. This situation is further exacerbated by low levels of digital and historical literacy amongst the public, making the digital sphere fertile ground for the proliferation of various forms of historical manipulation (Alit and Mursidi 2025)

The phenomenon of historical distortion in the digital space often manifests as the oversimplification of complex historical events, the omission of context, and the dissemination of conspiracy theories lacking any academic basis. Social media algorithms play a significant role in accelerating the spread of such narratives as they tend to promote content that generates high levels of engagement. Many creators of historical content on social media prioritise visual appeal and virality over historiographical accuracy. Consequently, the historical information received by users has often been reduced or even altered in meaning. Research on historical content on TikTok indicates that distorted historical information can influence pupils' understanding of a historical event, particularly when they rely on social media as their primary source for learning history. This situation has the potential to shape erroneous perceptions of history that are difficult to correct, as such information has become ingrained in the collective memory of digital users (Harisma, Mulyana, and Fauzi 2025) .

In addition to algorithmic factors, the emergence of artificial intelligence (AI) technology further increases the risk of historical disinformation. Technologies such as deepfakes enable the creation of images, sounds and videos that appear authentic, even though they are in fact the result of digital manipulation. In a historical context, this technology can be used to create false documentation about historical figures or events, thereby influencing public perception of historical facts. The existence of content that appears realistic makes it increasingly difficult for users to distinguish between legitimate historical evidence and digitally fabricated material. This situation demonstrates that the challenge of preserving historical truth in the digital age stems not only from textual narratives but also from increasingly sophisticated audiovisual manipulation. Therefore, strengthening the ability to verify sources and improve media literacy

has become an urgent necessity in the face of developments in modern information technology (Nagara 2025) .

Disinformation and the distortion of history in the digital sphere also have significant social and political implications. Manipulated historical narratives are often used to construct the identity of specific groups, reinforce social polarisation, or establish political legitimacy. In the Indonesian context, various historical issues – such as communism, ethnic conflicts and past political events – are frequently exploited to shape public opinion through the dissemination of inaccurate information. When historical narratives are used as propaganda tools, the public may lose the ability to understand history objectively. Consequently, trust in educational institutions, the media, and state bodies may decline, as the public tends to place greater trust in information circulating on social media than in credible academic sources. This phenomenon demonstrates that historical disinformation is not merely a matter of factual errors but a threat to the quality of democracy and the formation of a nation's collective memory (Ubaidillah and Hartanto 2020) .

To tackle historical disinformation and distortion in the digital sphere, there is a need for the continuous strengthening of historical literacy and digital literacy. Historical literacy helps individuals understand historical research methods, evaluate primary and secondary sources, and recognise bias within a historical narrative. Meanwhile, digital literacy enables the public to verify information before sharing it and to understand how social media algorithms work. Collaboration between educational institutions, the government, the media, and fact-checking communities is vital for creating a healthier information ecosystem. With strong critical thinking skills, the public will not merely be consumers of information, but will also be able to play an active role in safeguarding the accuracy of historical knowledge in the digital age (Alit and Mursidi 2025) .

3.2 Changes in the Learning Patterns of the Digital Generation

Changes in the learning patterns of the digital generation are characterised by a growing trend towards self-directed learning. Easy access to the internet enables learners to obtain learning materials without having to wait for explanations from teachers or lecturers. Various learning resources, such as e-journals, educational videos, online courses, and digital education platforms, provide learners with the opportunity to determine for themselves the time, place, and pace of learning that best suits their needs. This situation has fostered a learning culture that is more flexible and personalised compared to conventional learning systems, which tend to be standardised. However, the success of self-directed learning depends heavily on learners' ability to manage their time, set learning objectives, and evaluate information obtained from various digital sources (Rahmadi and Hayati 2020) .

Another characteristic of the digital generation is a tendency to learn through interactive and multimodal media. Information is no longer received solely in text form but also through a combination of videos, images, audio, animations and digital simulations. This diverse presentation of material helps learners grasp concepts more quickly as it engages multiple senses in the learning process. Consequently, platforms such as YouTube, Learning Management Systems (LMS), educational podcasts and interactive learning applications are becoming increasingly popular amongst learners. This transformation indicates that the learning process in the digital age places greater emphasis on learning experiences that are engaging, participatory and aligned with the information consumption habits of today's younger generation (Pramesworo, Mata, and Arbie 2026) .

Furthermore, the digital generation tends to learn collaboratively through digital networks. Various communication platforms such as WhatsApp groups, Telegram, Google Classroom, Discord and online discussion forums enable learners to exchange information and complete tasks together without having to be in the same physical location. The digital learning environment creates a broader space for collaboration, as learners can interact with peers, teachers, and learning resources from various regions and even countries. The ability to collaborate virtually has become one of the key competencies in 21st-century education, as the modern workplace increasingly relies on technology-based collaboration and digital communication (Pramesworo et al. 2026) .

In the context of history learning, the changing learning patterns of the digital generation present both opportunities and challenges. On the one hand, pupils can access digital archives, virtual museums, historical documentaries and various primary sources more easily than previous generations. On the other hand, the abundance of information on the internet also increases the risk of exposure to inaccurate information, hoaxes, and historical distortions. Therefore, history education in the digital age must not only focus on mastering historical facts but must also develop digital literacy and historical literacy skills. Pupils need to be equipped with the skills to verify sources, assess the credibility of information, and understand the context of a historical event before accepting or disseminating that information. In this way, digital technology can serve as an effective tool for strengthening historical understanding whilst fostering critical thinking skills among the younger generation (Fitriyani and Nugroho 2022) .

3.3 The Role of Social Media in the Popularisation of History

The development of social media has transformed the way people access, understand and disseminate historical information. Whereas in the past historical knowledge was primarily acquired through books, journals, museums or formal educational institutions, people can now access a wide range of historical information simply via a smartphone and an internet connection. Platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, Facebook and X enable the dissemination of historical information to a far wider audience in a short space of time. The presence of social media means that history is no longer viewed as an exclusive academic discipline accessible only to academics, but rather as knowledge that can be enjoyed by people from all walks of life. This phenomenon demonstrates that social media has played a significant role in the popularisation of history in the digital age through the presentation of content that is simpler, more engaging and easier for the public to understand (Kurniawan 2020) . One form of historical popularisation that is rapidly developing on social media is the use of visual content such as infographics, illustrations, short videos, animations and historical memes. This form of presentation is considered more effective in capturing the attention of the younger generation, who are accustomed to consuming information quickly and visually. Through historical infographics, complex historical events can be presented in the form of engaging summaries, making them easier for the general public to understand. As well as making the study of history more appealing, the use of visual media also helps to broaden the reach of historical information to sections of society that were previously less interested in conventional historical studies. In this way, social media helps to bridge the gap between the academic world and the wider public through the dissemination of historical knowledge in a more accessible manner (Kurniawan 2020) .Social media also opens up opportunities for the emergence of various digital history communities that play an active role in disseminating historical information to the public. Various communities, educational accounts and historical organisations utilise social media as a means to share articles, historical documentation, archive photographs, online discussions and the organisation of digital-based educational activities. The presence of these communities helps to raise public historical awareness whilst fostering a more open space for discussion regarding various historical events. In Indonesia, history communities such as the Historia Indonesia Community utilise social media not only as a means of publication but also as a medium for education, interaction, member recruitment, and the strengthening of a collective identity that cares about the preservation of the nation's history and culture (Angela and Yoedtadi 2019) .

In the world of education, social media is increasingly being utilised as an innovative medium for teaching history. The use of social media in learning enables teachers and pupils to interact via platforms that are already familiar to them in their daily lives. History content can be delivered through short videos, image posts, interactive quizzes, or online discussions, which are more engaging than traditional lecture-based methods. Research indicates that the use of social media in history teaching can boost pupils' interest in learning, as it is perceived as more enjoyable and better suited to the characteristics of the digital generation. Consequently, social media can serve as an effective alternative strategy for history teaching, helping to enhance pupils' participation and motivation to learn (Futrie 2021) .

As well as serving as an educational tool, social media also plays a role in strengthening historical awareness and cultural identity within the community. Various accounts highlighting local history, regional culture and traditional heritage are able to reintroduce historical values to the younger generation. Through the sharing of archival photographs, local historical stories and cultural documentation, social media helps to preserve the collective memory of the community whilst broadening appreciation for its cultural heritage. Research on Instagram accounts focusing on local history and culture indicates that social media can have cognitive, affective and conative impacts on its followers, thereby not only increasing knowledge but also fostering a greater concern for local history and culture (Triaputri and Muljono 2022) . Nevertheless, the popularisation of history through social media also faces a number of challenges. The nature of social media, which prioritises the speed of information dissemination, often results in historical material being presented in a brief and simplified manner, potentially omitting the important context of an event. Furthermore, not all historical content in circulation has a strong academic basis. Consequently, social media can become a vehicle for the spread of disinformation and historical distortion if users lack adequate digital literacy skills. Therefore, the popularisation of history via social media must be balanced by source verification, the use of credible references, and the strengthening of critical thinking skills so that the public not only receives interesting historical information but also information that is accurate and scientifically accountable (Kurniawan 2020) .

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the narrative approach of "historical traces that tell stories" is an innovative and effective pedagogical strategy for transforming the learning of Islamic Cultural History (ISC) from a rigid memorization method to a process of internalizing character values and strengthening students' Islamic identity. Strengthening Islamic historical literacy was successfully optimized through the integration of contextual learning strategies such as Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) and the use of digital media (such as interactive multimedia, social media, and virtual technology) that are adaptive to the visual characteristics of the cyber generation. Although digital transformation brings serious challenges in the form of rampant disinformation and historical distortion in cyberspace, strengthening holistic digital literacy and active collaboration between schools and families has proven to be able to develop students' critical thinking skills. Thus, the application of a narrative approach that utilizes contextual historical traces not only successfully addresses the challenges of the digital era but also serves as an important bridge in producing a reflective young generation rooted in the noble values of Islamic civilization.

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