

**THE DIGITAL MINDSET OF ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS EDUCATION
TEACHERS IN INTEGRATING MERDEKA CURRICULUM BASED
LEARNING TECHNOLOGY INTO THE HISTORY OF ISLAMIC CULTURE
(SKI) SUBJECT AT MTS N 1 PURWOREJO**

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Abstract: This study aims to analyze the transformation of IRE teachers' digital mindset in fostering openness toward the integration of educational technology, explore teachers' lived experiences in integrating digital technology into ICH instruction within the framework of the *Merdeka Curriculum*, and understand how teachers interpret the changes in teaching and learning processes following the adoption of digital technology. This study employed a qualitative approach using a hermeneutic phenomenological design. The research was conducted at MTs N 1 Purworejo, with an Islamic Religious Education (IRE) teacher responsible for teaching Islamic Cultural History (ICH) serving as the primary participant, while students were involved as supporting informants. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, classroom observations, and documentation, and subsequently analyzed using Van Manen's hermeneutic phenomenological approach through the processes of thematic identification, interpretation of lived experiences, and synthesis of essential meanings. The findings reveal that: (1) teachers' digital mindset develops through teaching experience, pedagogical reflection, and continuous adaptation to technological advancements; (2) this digital mindset fosters teachers' openness toward the integration of educational technology, as reflected in the use of various digital media and platforms during the planning, implementation, and assessment stages of instruction; and (3) teachers perceive technology as a means of creating more interactive learning environments, enhancing student engagement, and supporting the implementation of the principles of the *Merdeka Curriculum*. This study confirms that digital mindset constitutes a fundamental foundation for the successful integration of educational technology in *madrasahs*. The findings contribute to the growing body of scholarship on digital mindset in Islamic education while also providing practical implications for strengthening teacher professional development programs that focus not only on digital competence but also on cultivating adaptive mindsets capable of responding to ongoing educational transformation.

Keywords: Digital Mindset; Islamic Religious Education (IRE) Teachers; Educational Technology Integration; *Merdeka Curriculum*; Islamic Cultural History (ICH).

Abstrak: Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis transformasi pola pikir digital guru Pendidikan Agama Islam (PAI) dalam menumbuhkan keterbukaan terhadap integrasi teknologi pendidikan, mengeksplorasi pengalaman nyata guru dalam mengintegrasikan teknologi digital ke dalam pembelajaran Sejarah Budaya Islam (SBI) dalam kerangka Kurikulum Merdeka, serta memahami bagaimana guru menafsirkan perubahan dalam proses belajar-mengajar setelah penerapan teknologi digital. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain fenomenologis hermeneutik. Penelitian ini dilakukan di MTs N 1 Purworejo, dengan seorang guru Pendidikan Agama Islam (IRE) yang bertanggung jawab mengajar Sejarah Budaya Islam (ICH) sebagai peserta utama, sedangkan siswa terlibat sebagai informan pendukung. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi kelas, dan dokumentasi, kemudian dianalisis menggunakan pendekatan fenomenologis hermeneutik Van Manen melalui proses identifikasi tematik, interpretasi pengalaman hidup, dan sintesis makna esensial. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa: (1) pola pikir digital guru berkembang melalui pengalaman mengajar, refleksi pedagogis, dan adaptasi berkelanjutan terhadap kemajuan teknologi; (2) pola pikir digital ini mendorong keterbukaan guru terhadap integrasi teknologi pendidikan, sebagaimana tercermin dalam penggunaan berbagai media dan platform digital selama tahap perencanaan, pelaksanaan, dan penilaian pembelajaran; dan (3) guru memandang teknologi

Kata kunci: Pola Pikir Digital; Guru Pendidikan Agama Islam (PAI); Integrasi Teknologi Pendidikan; Kurikulum Merdeka; Sejarah Budaya Islam (SBI).

INTRODUCTION

Many educational digitalization initiatives have been limited to the provision of technological devices and learning platforms, whereas the success of digital transformation is fundamentally determined by how teachers perceive, embrace, and integrate technology into their everyday teaching practices. Digital transformation has become one of the defining characteristics of educational change in the twenty-first century, reshaping the ways teachers teach, students learn, and educational institutions manage the learning process. Digital technology is no longer viewed merely as a supporting instructional tool; rather, it has evolved into an integral component of the educational ecosystem that requires all educational stakeholders to demonstrate adaptability, creativity, and innovation. Within this context, the success of digital transformation depends not only on the availability of technological resources or supporting infrastructure but also on individuals' mindsets in interpreting, accepting, and responding to ongoing change. A growing body of research indicates that a **digital mindset** plays a pivotal role in fostering individuals' readiness to adapt to digital

environments, develop new competencies, and respond constructively to continuous transformation.¹ Accordingly, a digital mindset constitutes one of the fundamental foundations for explaining both the success and the failure of technology integration in education.

In the context of Islamic education, the urgency of fostering a digital mindset has become increasingly prominent with the implementation of the *Merdeka Curriculum*, which promotes student-centered learning, the development of twenty-first-century competencies, and the more flexible integration of digital technologies into teaching and learning. A digital mindset is understood as a set of cognitive, affective, and behavioral capacities that enable individuals to think critically and creatively while adapting effectively to the rapid and dynamic advancement of digital technologies and information.² Islamic Education (PAI) teachers are expected not only to possess strong mastery of Islamic subject matter but also to create learning experiences that are relevant to the characteristics and learning needs of the digital generation. A growing body of research suggests that the integration of technology into Islamic Education instruction has the potential to enhance student engagement, diversify instructional strategies, and support the achievement of more contextualized and meaningful learning outcomes.³ Nevertheless, the implementation of digital transformation within Islamic educational institutions continues to face significant challenges, including teachers' readiness, shifts in instructional paradigms, and their capacity to adapt to the evolving demands of digital pedagogy.⁴

Amid these demands, the teaching of *Islamic Cultural History* (SKI) faces more specific challenges. The subject is characterized by content that requires teachers to present historical events in ways that are contextualized, engaging, and meaningful for

¹ Muhammad Soleh Hapudin, *Digital Mindset Of Behavior: Teori Dan Konsep Pengembangan Kompetensi Guru Menghadapi Transformasi Digital*, ed. Aklia Suslia et al., Edisi Digi (Jakarta Selatan: Salemba Humanika, 2022).

² M. Alenezi, S. Wardat, and M. Akour, "The Need of Integrating Digital Education in Higher Education: Challenges and Opportunities," *Sustainability (Switzerland)* 15, no. (6) (2023), <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.3390/su15064782>.

³ Ahmad Sodikin et al., "Integrasi Teknologi Pembelajaran Di Era Revolusi Industri 4 . 0 Pada Kurikulum Merdeka Mata Pelajaran PAI," *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam Nusantara* 03, no. 02 (2024): 101–14, <https://jsr.unuha.ac.id/index.php/JUPIN/article/view/995>.

⁴ Munawwir, Rahma Silvia, and Adawiyah Rabiyyatul, "Profesionalisme Guru Dalam Penerapan Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar Pada Mata Pelajaran PAI," *Studia Religia: Jurnal Pemikiran Dan Pendidikan Islam* 9, no. 2 (2025): 332.

students. Ideally, digital technologies can be utilized to enrich the visualization of historical events, enhance instructional interactivity, and foster active student engagement. However, existing evidence indicates that SKI instruction continues to be predominantly characterized by conventional, teacher-centered approaches, while the integration of digital media has yet to become an integral component of the teaching and learning process.⁵ These conditions indicate a gap between the expectations of digitally oriented learning promoted by the *Merdeka Curriculum* and the realities of its implementation in educational practice. Therefore, the issue of technology integration in SKI instruction cannot be adequately understood solely from a technical perspective; it must also be examined through the ways in which teachers perceive, interpret, and make sense of technology within their pedagogical practices.

Research on technology and Islamic education has evolved along several major strands. The first strand focuses on the integration of educational technology and the development of digital learning media in Islamic Religious Education (PAI).⁶ The second strand examines the implementation of the *Merdeka Curriculum*, teacher professionalism, and the challenges of adapting to digital educational transformation.⁷ The third strand explores the concepts of digital mindset, growth mindset, and individuals' adaptive capacity in responding to digital transformation.⁸ Overall, these studies have demonstrated the importance of technology, digital competence, and teacher readiness in navigating educational change. However, most of the existing literature continues to emphasize the functional and instrumental dimensions of technology use, paying comparatively less attention to the underlying cognitive and interpretive processes through which teachers perceive and internalize technological change.

⁵ M Fauzan and Riri Rahmadhani, "Analisis Pembelajaran SKI Di MtsS Rao-Rao : Tantangan Integrasi , Inovasi Metode , Dan Media Pembelajaran," *Jurnal Pengabdian Kepada Masyarakat Nusantara (JPkMN)* 6, no. 1 (2024): 411–18, <https://doi.org/http://doi.org/10.55338/jpkmn.v6i1.1.4946>.

⁶ Sodikin et al., "Integrasi Teknologi Pembelajaran Di Era Revolusi Industri 4 . 0 Pada Kurikulum Merdeka Mata Pelajaran PAI."

⁷ Munawwir, Silvia, and Rabiyyatul, "Profesionalisme Guru Dalam Penerapan Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar Pada Mata Pelajaran PAI."

⁸ Ahmad Saiful Rizal, "Relevansi Growth Mindset Dengan Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar Di EravSocietyg5.0," *Al-Ishlah: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 21, no. 2 (2023), <https://doi.org/10.35905/alishlah.v%0vi%i.8048>.

Although previous studies have made significant contributions to the field, they still leave important gaps that warrant further investigation. Most existing research has focused on digital literacy, technological competence, the effectiveness of digital learning media, or the challenges associated with implementing digital education policies. In contrast, studies seeking to understand how teachers' digital mindset is shaped through lived experiences, personal reflection, adaptive processes, and professional interactions remain relatively limited, particularly within the context of Islamic education and the teaching of Islamic Cultural History (SKI) in *madrasahs*. Moreover, the predominance of survey-based, literature review, and evaluative research has resulted in limited attention to the subjective meanings that underlie teachers' acceptance of—or resistance to—technology. Consequently, a significant knowledge gap remains regarding teachers' lived experiences as the foundation for the development of a digital mindset in the practice of integrating technology into teaching and learning.

Building upon this research gap, the present study offers a different perspective by positioning teachers' lived experiences as the central focus of analysis. It aims to examine how the digital mindset of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers is constructed in the process of integrating learning technologies within the *Merdeka Curriculum* for Islamic Cultural History (SKI) instruction at MTs N 1 Purworejo through a hermeneutic phenomenological approach. The novelty of this study lies in its exploration of the process through which teachers' digital mindset evolves, their experiences of integrating technology into instructional practices, and the meanings they construct regarding the resulting changes in teaching and learning. Specifically, this study seeks to address three research questions: (1) How does the development of teachers' digital mindset foster openness toward technology integration? (2) How do teachers experience the integration of digital technology in SKI instruction? and (3) How do teachers interpret changes in the learning process and student engagement following the integration of digital technology into classroom instruction.

This study is grounded in the assumption that the successful integration of technology into teaching and learning is determined not merely by teachers' technical competence or the availability of digital infrastructure. Rather, it is profoundly influenced by teachers' digital mindset, which evolves through professional experience,

reflective practice, continuous learning, and ongoing professional interactions. From the perspective of growth mindset theory, individuals who perceive change as an opportunity for learning and development tend to be more receptive to innovation, more adaptable in responding to challenges, and better able to develop instructional strategies that align with students' learning needs. Accordingly, this study argues that digital mindset constitutes a fundamental foundation for understanding how teachers perceive and make sense of technology, integrate it into Islamic Cultural History (SKI) instruction, and construct pedagogical practices that are consistent with the principles of the *Merdeka Curriculum*.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative approach using a hermeneutic phenomenological design aimed at understanding the meaning of participants' lived experiences regarding a particular phenomenon.⁹ This approach was selected because the study did not aim to quantitatively measure teachers' digital mindset; rather, it sought to understand how the digital mindset is developed, experienced, and interpreted by Islamic Education (PAI) teachers during the integration of learning technologies into *Islamic Cultural History (SKI)* instruction. From a hermeneutic phenomenological perspective, participants' lived experiences are regarded as the primary source for uncovering the meanings that underpin their actions and decisions within the context of their everyday professional practice.¹⁰ Therefore, this approach was considered appropriate for exploring the construction of teachers' digital mindset as an evolving experience shaped through reflection, adaptation, and professional interactions during the implementation of the *Merdeka Curriculum*.

The study was conducted at MTs N 1 Purworejo, Central Java, Indonesia, a public Islamic junior secondary school (*madrasah tsanawiyah*) that has implemented the *Merdeka Curriculum* and integrated various digital technologies into its teaching and learning processes. The research site was selected purposively based on its alignment with the study objectives, particularly the existence of technology-integrated *Islamic Cultural History (SKI)* instruction, which enabled the researchers to explore teachers'

⁹ Max van Manen, *Researching Lived Experience: Human Science for an Action Sensitive Pedagogy*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2016).

¹⁰ Nasir et al., "Pendekatan Fenomenologi Dalam Penelitian Kualitatif," *Innovative: Journal of Social Science Research* 3, no. 2 (2023): 107–115.

experiences in responding to digital transformation in educational practice. Furthermore, the *madrasah* context provided an appropriate setting for examining how technology is integrated into Islamic Religious Education while maintaining the Islamic values that constitute a defining characteristic of Islamic educational institutions.

Research participants were selected using a purposive sampling technique based on their relevance to the objectives of the study..¹¹ The primary participant was an Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teacher responsible for teaching *Islamic Cultural History (SKI)* who actively implemented technology-enhanced instruction within the framework of the *Merdeka Curriculum*. To obtain a more comprehensive perspective, the study also involved three students as supporting participants, selected based on their active involvement in technology-integrated SKI learning. The inclusion of students was intended to enrich the understanding of how technology integration influenced both the learning process and their lived learning experiences.

Data were collected between May 25 and June 30, 2026, through in-depth interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore the teacher's experiences regarding the development of digital mindset, the integration of digital technologies into SKI instruction, and the meanings attributed to the changes that emerged following the use of digital technology. Classroom observations were undertaken to obtain a factual understanding of the use of digital learning media, classroom interactions, and students' responses throughout the instructional process. Document analysis complemented these data by examining supporting materials, including lesson modules, instructional plans, digital learning resources, and records of classroom activities. The combination of these data collection methods enabled the researchers to develop a rich and holistic understanding of the phenomenon under investigation.¹²

Data were analyzed using Van Manen's hermeneutic phenomenological approach, which emphasizes the interpretation of the meanings embedded in participants' lived experiences.¹³ The analytical process began with *epoche* (bracketing)

¹¹ John W. Creswell and Cheryl N. Poth, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*, 4th ed. (California: SAGE Publications, 2018).

¹² Sugiyono, *Metode Penelitian Kuantitatif, Kualitatif Dan R&D*, 3rd ed. (Alfabeta, 2023).

¹³ Max van Manen, *Phenomenology of Practice: Meaning-Giving Methods in Phenomenological Research and Writing* (New York: Routledge, 2014).

to minimize the researchers' preconceptions and biases regarding the phenomenon under investigation. The next stage involved horizontalization, in which significant statements related to the participants' experiences were identified. These statements were subsequently organized into thematic categories based on their shared meanings. The researchers then developed textual descriptions to portray what the participants experienced and structural descriptions to explain how those experiences occurred. Finally, an essential meaning synthesis was undertaken to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the construction of teachers' digital mindset in integrating learning technologies into *Islamic Cultural History (SKI)* instruction within the implementation of the *Merdeka Curriculum*.

The trustworthiness of the data was ensured through the implementation of several strategies designed to enhance the credibility and dependability of the research findings.¹⁴ First, source triangulation was employed by comparing information obtained from the Islamic Education (PAI) teacher and the participating students. Second, method triangulation was conducted by cross-checking data derived from in-depth interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis. Third, member checking was carried out by inviting participants to review the researcher's interpretations to ensure that the interpreted meanings accurately reflected their lived experiences. Fourth, referential adequacy was established through the systematic use of field notes, supporting documents, and other research data to strengthen the interpretive process. Collectively, these strategies were implemented to ensure that the study's findings achieved an adequate level of credibility, consistency, and trustworthiness.

This study adhered to the fundamental principles of qualitative research ethics. Prior to the commencement of data collection, all participants were provided with a clear explanation of the research objectives, research procedures, and their rights to participate voluntarily in the study.¹⁵ Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to the commencement of the interviews and classroom observations. Participants' identities were protected through the use of codes or pseudonyms

¹⁴ Yvonna, S. Lincoln, and Egon G. Guba, *Naturalistic Inquiry* (California: SAGE Publications, 1985).

¹⁵ Johnny Saldaña, *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers*, 4th ed. (London: SAGE Publications, 2021).

throughout the data reporting process. Furthermore, all data collected were used exclusively for academic and research purposes and were securely stored to safeguard participants' privacy and confidentiality.

DISCUSSION

The discussion presented in this section is intended to address the research objectives formulated at the outset of the study, namely: (1) to examine how changes in teachers' digital mindset foster openness toward technology integration; (2) to explore teachers' experiences in integrating digital technology into *Islamic Cultural History* (*Sejarah Kebudayaan Islam* [SKI]) instruction; and (3) to understand how teachers interpret changes in the learning process and student engagement following the integration of digital technology. The findings indicate that the digital mindset of Islamic Education (PAI) teachers in SKI instruction is not developed merely through technological proficiency. Rather, it evolves through teaching experience, adaptation to educational change, and continuous reflection on students' learning needs. Accordingly, this discussion focuses on three interrelated themes emerging from the findings: the transformation of teachers' digital mindset that fosters openness to technology, teachers' experiences in integrating technology into SKI instruction, and their interpretations of the changes in learning practices following the adoption of digital technology.

A. The Transformation of Digital Mindset as a Process of Adaptation to Educational Transformation at MTs N 1 Purworejo

The findings indicate that teachers' openness to integrating technology into SKI instruction evolved through professional experiences that reshaped their perspectives on teaching practices. The teacher perceived that the broad and complex nature of SKI content could no longer be effectively delivered through conventional, teacher-centered instruction alone. This experience encouraged the teacher to seek alternative instructional approaches that were better aligned with the characteristics and learning needs of students in the digital era. As the teacher explained:

"...teachers in the past often relied on conventional classroom instruction, which was very monotonous... I emphasize the use of technology-based learning media, especially in Islamic Education

(PAI), particularly SKI, so that students become more interested in the lessons..."

This statement demonstrates that the teacher's decision to integrate technology was not merely driven by the availability or requirement of digital tools. Rather, it emerged from a process of reflection on prior teaching experiences that were perceived as insufficient to foster meaningful student engagement. These experiences subsequently shaped the teacher's awareness that technology possesses significant pedagogical value in presenting SKI content in ways that are more contextual, engaging, and accessible. Therefore, the transformation of the teacher's digital mindset did not occur instantaneously as a response to educational policy; instead, it developed through an ongoing process of critical reflection on everyday teaching practices.

This transformation was further reinforced by the teacher's account of how instructional practices changed after the adoption of digital technologies. The teacher explained that conventional teaching methods often resulted in monotonous classroom experiences, motivating the use of a projector and Smart TV as instructional media.

"...when I first relied on conventional teaching methods, I found them difficult... they were monotonous and uninteresting... I felt compelled to purchase a projector so that I could apply it in my teaching..."

Classroom observations corroborated these findings. Prior to the lesson, the teacher prepared the necessary digital equipment, connected the devices to the Smart TV in the Grade VII-B classroom, and ensured that all instructional media were ready before teaching commenced. These observations demonstrate that technology use was no longer occasional or incidental; rather, it had become an integral component of the teacher's professional routine in planning and implementing instruction. This consistency suggests that the teacher's digital mindset had become internalized within everyday pedagogical practice.

From the perspective of a digital mindset, this concept refers to the way individuals perceive technology as an opportunity to enhance the quality of their

work and learning, rather than as a threat or an additional burden.¹⁶ The findings reveal that the teacher not only accepted the presence of technology but also developed the conviction that technology constitutes a pedagogical necessity in teaching *Islamic Cultural History (SKI)*. This perspective is reflected in the teacher's statement:

"...the mindset of Islamic Education teachers must change; they have to keep pace with the times and should not remain outdated..."

This statement illustrates a shift in the teacher's orientation from a teacher-centered instructional approach toward one that is more adaptive to technological developments and responsive to students' learning needs. In other words, technology is not perceived as an end in itself but rather as a pedagogical instrument that enables teachers to create more meaningful and engaging learning experiences.

This finding is consistent with Carol Dweck's concept of growth mindset, which posits that individuals with a growth-oriented mindset tend to perceive challenges as opportunities for learning and developing new capabilities. In the context of this study, the teacher's openness to integrating technology reflects the characteristics of a growth mindset, demonstrated through a willingness to continuously learn, adapt to educational change, and refine instructional practices in response to the evolving demands of contemporary education.¹⁷ In the context of this study, the teacher's openness to using technology reflects the characteristics of a growth mindset, demonstrated by a willingness to move beyond less effective instructional practices, independently acquire technological competencies, and adapt instructional strategies to the evolving demands of twenty-first-century education. This transformation suggests that digital transformation in the *madrasah* extends beyond the acquisition of technical skills; it also requires teachers' psychological readiness and pedagogical adaptability to respond effectively to educational change.

¹⁶ Hapudin, *Digital Mindset Of Behavior: Teori Dan Konsep Pengembangan Kompetensi Guru Menghadapi Transformasi Digital*.

¹⁷ Dweck, "Mindset: The New Psychology of Success," 2006.

Ilmuna: Jurnal Studi Pendidikan Agama Islam I Vol. 8, No. 2 September (2026)
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The findings of this study also reinforce those of Hapudin, who argued that digital mindset is a critical factor in shaping individuals' readiness to navigate digital transformation.¹⁸ However, this study extends previous scholarship by demonstrating that the development of teachers' digital mindset is influenced not only by technological advancements and the demands of educational policies, but also by pedagogical experiences that foster critical reflection on the effectiveness of instructional practices. Consequently, teachers' professional experiences serve as the primary foundation for developing a new perspective that positions technology as an integral component of teaching and learning practices.

Drawing on these findings, this study suggests that strengthening digital transformation in *madrasahs* cannot rely solely on the provision of technological infrastructure or technical training. The teachers' experiences indicate that the successful integration of technology is fundamentally shaped by the development of a digital mindset that is adaptive, reflective, and oriented toward continuous instructional improvement. Therefore, efforts to enhance technology-supported learning should focus not only on strengthening teachers' digital competencies but also on cultivating a mindset that perceives change as an opportunity to create more innovative, contextualized, and student-centered learning experiences.

From a practical perspective, these findings further indicate that advancing digital transformation in *madrasahs* requires more than providing facilities and technical capacity-building programs. It also necessitates deliberate efforts to foster teachers' adaptive mindsets. Accordingly, the success of digital learning transformation should be understood as a process involving both the development of professional competencies and the transformation of teachers' mindsets.

B. Technology Integration as a Manifestation of Digital Mindset in SKI Teaching Practices at MTs N 1 Purworejo

The findings indicate that technology integration has become an inseparable component of Islamic Cultural History (SKI) teaching practices at MTs N 1 Purworejo. Technology was not only utilized during classroom instruction but was systematically integrated throughout the instructional process, encompassing

¹⁸ Hapudin, *Digital Mindset Of Behavior: Teori Dan Konsep Pengembangan Kompetensi Guru Menghadapi Transformasi Digital*.

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lesson planning, implementation, and assessment. Interview data revealed that the teacher employed a wide range of digital devices and learning media, including Smart TVs, projectors, mobile phones, instructional videos, digital teaching materials, and communication applications to facilitate content delivery and classroom interaction. The teacher further explained that the implementation of the *Merdeka Curriculum* posed no significant challenges because technology had already become an integral part of his instructional practice prior to the adoption of the new curriculum. As the teacher explained:

"...I was not particularly surprised because the Merdeka Curriculum is technology-oriented and requires teachers to utilize and maximize technology in the learning process. Since I had already developed the mindset that technology is essential, I adapted without difficulty..."

This statement demonstrates that technology integration did not emerge merely as a short-term response to policy reform; rather, it represents a manifestation of a digital mindset that had evolved through the teacher's professional experience. In this context, the *Merdeka Curriculum* was perceived not as an additional burden but as an opportunity to reinforce instructional practices that had already been established. Consequently, the teacher's readiness to integrate technology was shaped more by his beliefs and perspectives regarding the pedagogical value of technology than by his technical ability to operate digital devices.

The interview findings were further corroborated by classroom observations, which showed that technology was consistently incorporated throughout the instructional process. The teacher presented learning materials using a Smart TV, provided instructional stimuli through visual media, and facilitated students' engagement with various digital learning resources. Classroom documentation also revealed that learning activities were organized through collaborative group work, student presentations, and assignments supported by digital media, while the teacher assumed the role of a facilitator who guided and supported the learning process. Furthermore, the use of technology extended beyond classroom instruction. The teacher employed digital communication

platforms to sustain students' learning by distributing instructional materials via WhatsApp. As the teacher stated:

"...I still send the learning materials through WhatsApp..."

These practices indicate that technology was utilized continuously as a medium for communication, instructional material distribution, and learning support, enabling the teaching and learning process to extend beyond the physical boundaries of the classroom and conventional instructional time.

From the perspective of technology integration in education, the effective use of technology is determined not by the number of digital tools employed, but by the teacher's ability to align technology with instructional objectives and students' learning needs.¹⁹ The findings further demonstrate that the teacher selected a variety of digital media based on their pedagogical functions to facilitate content delivery, enrich students' learning experiences, and enhance student engagement. This indicates that technology is no longer positioned as a supplementary instructional tool; rather, it has become an integral component of pedagogical strategies that are deliberately designed to support more contextualized and student-centered learning in Islamic Cultural History (SKI).

These findings are consistent with the study conducted by Sodikin et al., which argues that technology integration in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) supports the implementation of the *Merdeka Curriculum* by fostering more flexible and student-centered learning environments.²⁰ This study also confirms that the use of digital media enables teachers to provide more diverse learning resources, thereby creating learning experiences that are more contextualized, interactive, and meaningful for students.

Nevertheless, this study offers a perspective that differs from much of the existing literature, which has primarily emphasized digital literacy, technical competence, or the availability of technological infrastructure. Drawing on the teachers' lived experiences revealed through the interviews, the findings suggest

¹⁹ Mishra and Kohler, "Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge: A Framework for Teacher Knowledge," *Teachers College Record* 108, no. 6 (2026): 1017–54.

²⁰ Sodikin et al., "Integrasi Teknologi Pembelajaran Di Era Revolusi Industri 4 . 0 Pada Kurikulum Merdeka Mata Pelajaran PAI."

that the most decisive factor in successful technology integration is not merely proficiency in operating digital devices, but rather the belief that technology possesses pedagogical value capable of enhancing the quality of teaching and learning. In other words, technical competence alone is likely to result in an instrumental use of technology unless it is accompanied by a digital mindset that recognizes technology as an integral component of meaningful learning. Accordingly, this study extends previous scholarship by demonstrating that the sustainability of technology integration is influenced more by changes in teachers' ways of thinking than by their technical ability to operate digital technologies.

Taken together, these findings indicate that technology integration in Islamic Cultural History (SKI) instruction constitutes a pedagogical process shaped by teachers' psychological, cognitive, and professional dimensions. Therefore, professional development programs in *madrassahs* should be directed not only toward strengthening teachers' digital skills but also toward cultivating a digital mindset that is adaptive, reflective, and receptive to educational innovation. In this way, digital transformation in teaching and learning extends beyond the mere use of technology as an instructional medium and evolves into a broader pedagogical paradigm shift that supports the sustainable implementation of the *Merdeka Curriculum*.

The academic implication of these findings is the need to conceptualize technology integration as a pedagogical process shaped by teachers' psychological, cognitive, and professional factors. From a practical perspective, the findings underscore the importance of designing teacher professional development programs that focus not only on enhancing digital competencies but also on fostering a mindset that supports continuous instructional innovation.

C. Interpreting Technology as a Means of Realizing Student-Centered Learning under the *Merdeka Curriculum* at MTs N 1 Purworejo

The findings reveal that the teacher perceived the use of technology not merely as a supplementary instructional medium but as a means of creating learning experiences that are more engaging, interactive, and aligned with the characteristics of learners in the digital era. Based on the interview data, the teacher explained that

the decision to integrate technology was driven by the need to transform a classroom environment previously dominated by conventional instructional methods into one that is more dynamic and enjoyable. As the teacher explained:

"...the needs of students in the modern era require the use of technology, which motivated my decision to integrate it into the teaching process in order to create a classroom atmosphere that is more engaging and enjoyable..."

This statement indicates that the teacher did not perceive technology as the ultimate goal of instruction; rather, it was regarded as a medium for creating learning experiences that are more relevant to students' needs. From a hermeneutic phenomenological perspective, this interpretation is significant because it illustrates how the teacher's professional experiences shaped his understanding of technology. His teaching experiences led him to construct technology as a pedagogical instrument capable of fostering a more dynamic learning environment, enhancing classroom interaction, and strengthening student engagement in Islamic Cultural History (SKI) learning. Consequently, the meaning the teacher attributed to technology became the foundation guiding his pedagogical decisions and instructional practices in the classroom.

This interpretation was further reflected in the teacher's considerations when selecting technologies for instructional use. The teacher emphasized that technology was employed not only to facilitate content delivery but also to align instruction with students' characteristics and reduce the dominance of teacher-centered learning. As the teacher stated:

"...the main considerations are to transform the classroom atmosphere, reduce the teacher's workload, and ensure that learning is aligned with the needs of today's students..."

The observational findings further substantiated these interview data. Throughout the learning process, students actively participated in group discussions, classroom presentations, and project-based learning activities supported by digital media. Classroom observations also demonstrated that the teacher primarily assumed the role of a facilitator who guided the learning process, while students were provided with greater opportunities to discuss, collaborate, and construct their own understanding. These findings suggest that technology

was utilized to facilitate a pedagogical shift toward student-centered learning, consistent with the principles underlying the implementation of the *Merdeka Curriculum*.

Furthermore, the teacher interpreted technology as a means of supporting the implementation of the core principles of the *Merdeka Curriculum*, particularly in fostering learning environments that are flexible, differentiated, and responsive to students' diverse learning needs. This perspective was reflected in the following statement:

"...the use of digital technology helps implement the principles of the Merdeka Curriculum by facilitating differentiated instruction, creating interactive learning experiences, and supporting adaptive formative assessment..."

This statement demonstrates that the teacher not only understood the technical functions of technology but was also able to connect its use with broader pedagogical objectives. In this context, technology was interpreted as an instrument that enabled the teacher to translate the principles of the *Merdeka Curriculum* into concrete classroom practices. These findings indicate a strong relationship between digital mindset and teachers' ability to integrate the values of student-centered learning through the meaningful use of technology.

The findings of this study are consistent with those of previous research demonstrating that the use of technology can enhance students' participation, strengthen classroom interaction, and foster more active and contextualized learning experiences.²¹ However, this study offers a more nuanced perspective by demonstrating that increased student engagement is not merely attributable to the presence of technology itself, but rather to the ways in which teachers interpret and integrate technology into pedagogical strategies that are aligned with students' learning needs and the principles of the *Merdeka Curriculum*. Thus, the success of digital learning is determined not only by the availability of digital media but also by the meanings that teachers construct regarding the pedagogical role of technology within the learning process.

²¹ Munawwir, Silvia, and Rabiyyatul, "Profesionalisme Guru Dalam Penerapan Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar Pada Mata Pelajaran PAI."

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Another noteworthy finding is that teachers perceive technology as a means of facilitating differentiated instruction and creating more flexible learning environments. This finding highlights the close relationship between teachers' digital mindset and their ability to translate the principles of the *Merdeka Curriculum* into authentic classroom practice. Accordingly, digital mindset influences not only teachers' acceptance of technology but also the ways in which they construct and enact student-centered learning.

From a practical perspective, these findings suggest that the successful implementation of the *Merdeka Curriculum* in *madrasahs* is strongly influenced by teachers' ability to perceive technology as an integral component of their pedagogical strategies. Therefore, teacher professional development should be directed toward integrating digital competence, pedagogical competence, and a thorough understanding of the educational philosophy underpinning the *Merdeka Curriculum*.

Overall, this study demonstrates that digital mindset constitutes a fundamental foundation influencing how teachers accept, integrate, and interpret technology in Islamic Cultural History (SKI) instruction. The overarching pattern emerging from the findings indicates that teachers' digital mindset evolves through continuous professional experience, reflective practice, and sustained adaptation to educational change. These findings make a theoretical contribution to the growing body of scholarship on digital mindset in Islamic education by positioning teachers' lived experiences as the primary factor explaining the successful integration of educational technology. In contrast to most previous studies, which have primarily emphasized digital literacy, technological competence, or the availability of technological infrastructure, this study demonstrates that teachers' subjective experiences constitute the foundation upon which the acceptance, utilization, and interpretation of technology in classroom practice are constructed.

From a practical standpoint, the findings indicate that digital transformation in *madrasahs* should be understood as a process of pedagogical paradigm change. Consequently, teacher professional development programs should focus not only on enhancing digital skills but also on cultivating an adaptive, reflective, and innovation-oriented digital mindset.

Although this study provides an in-depth understanding of the lived experience of an Islamic Education teacher within the *madrasah* context, it has several limitations. The research was conducted at a single research site with a limited number of participants, and therefore its findings cannot be generalized across all Islamic educational settings. Future research is recommended to involve a broader range of *madrasahs* with diverse institutional characteristics, different levels of Islamic education, and a larger number of participants in order to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics through which teachers' digital mindset is formed in supporting the digital transformation of Islamic education.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the digital mindset of Islamic Education (PAI) teachers plays a pivotal role in fostering openness toward the integration of educational technology in Islamic Cultural History (SKI) instruction within the *Merdeka Curriculum* at MTs N 1 Purworejo. Teachers' digital mindset develops through teaching experience, pedagogical reflection, and a continuous process of adaptation to ongoing educational change. This transformation in mindset encourages teachers to perceive technology as an essential component of instruction that supports the delivery of learning materials in ways that are more engaging, interactive, and responsive to students' characteristics. The findings further reveal that technology integration is reflected not only in the use of various digital devices and learning media throughout the instructional process, but also in teachers' interpretations of technology as a means of enhancing student engagement and realizing the principles of the *Merdeka Curriculum*. Accordingly, this study successfully addresses its research objectives by elucidating the process of digital mindset transformation, teachers' experiences of technology integration, and the meanings they construct regarding changes in the learning process following the adoption of digital technology.

This study contributes to the advancement of digital mindset scholarship in the field of Islamic education by demonstrating that the successful integration of educational technology cannot be explained solely by technical competence or the availability of technological infrastructure. Instead, the findings underscore the critical importance of teachers' psychological and pedagogical dimensions in facilitating the

digital transformation of teaching and learning. From a practical perspective, the findings indicate that teacher professional development programs in *madrasahs* should extend beyond enhancing digital literacy and technological skills to include the cultivation of adaptive, reflective, and innovation-oriented mindsets. Furthermore, these findings may serve as valuable considerations for *madrasah* administrators and educational policymakers in designing more comprehensive and sustainable strategies for implementing digital transformation.

The central message emerging from this study is that digital transformation in SKI instruction within the *Merdeka Curriculum* fundamentally represents a transformation in teachers' ways of thinking about technology as an integral component of pedagogical practice. Technology functions not merely as an instructional aid but also as a medium through which more student-centered learning experiences can be created. Therefore, efforts to enhance the quality of technology-supported learning should be accompanied by the development of teachers' digital mindset as the primary foundation for educational transformation. Future research is recommended to investigate teachers' digital mindset across different levels of Islamic education, various subject areas, and more diverse institutional contexts in order to achieve a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of digital transformation within Islamic education.

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the research was conducted at a single research site with a limited number of participants; therefore, the findings represent context-specific experiences and are not intended to be generalized broadly. Second, the study focused exclusively on the experiences of an Islamic Education teacher responsible for teaching Islamic Cultural History (SKI), and thus does not capture the diversity of teachers' digital mindsets across other subject areas or educational levels. Third, the study employed a hermeneutic phenomenological approach that emphasizes the interpretation of participants' subjective lived experiences rather than quantitatively measuring the level of digital mindset. Accordingly, future studies are encouraged to involve a larger number of participants, include *madrasahs* with diverse institutional characteristics, and adopt mixed-methods approaches that combine qualitative and quantitative research designs

to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between digital mindset and technology integration in educational practice.

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